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20 TURNING POINTS

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Welcome

"History's greatest gift to us is understanding"

The more you know about the conflicts of the past, the better you're able to piece together the delicate duel of cause and effect that underpins the present, and even give you a few hints about the future.

That ethic underpins everything we've done on your new-look **History of War**.

We've introduced new regular features to offer greater detail than every before in our mission to take you inside the minds of heroes, under the bonnet of war machines and high above the battlefield to see great victories and crushing defeats as they really happened.

However, it's not just centuries of warfare we want to get to grips with, it's you as well.

Tell us what campaigns you want to see covered in **History of War** and what you think of our new-look features using the Facebook, Twitter and email addresses below!

James

James Hoare
Editor in Chief

EMAIL
frontline@imagine-publishing.co.uk

CONTRIBUTORS

TIM WILLIAMSON
Our meticulous Production Editor, Tim, is responsible for the day-to-day running of **History of War**. Still, he found the time to get a tour of the HMS Medusa, the last surviving vessel of the D-Day landings at Omaha beach, starting on page 90.

JACK GRIFFITHS
A History graduate and **History of War** Staff Writer, Jack's enthusiasm allows him to become immersed in a variety of topics, from the origins of the current Crimean Crisis on page 72, to the final battle of Lord Nelson over on page 30.

ANDREW BROWN
As the Editor of our sister title **All About History**, Andrew is no stranger to the impact even the smallest decisions can have. He put those skills to good use, detailing the 20 battlefield turning points that changed the world on page 78.

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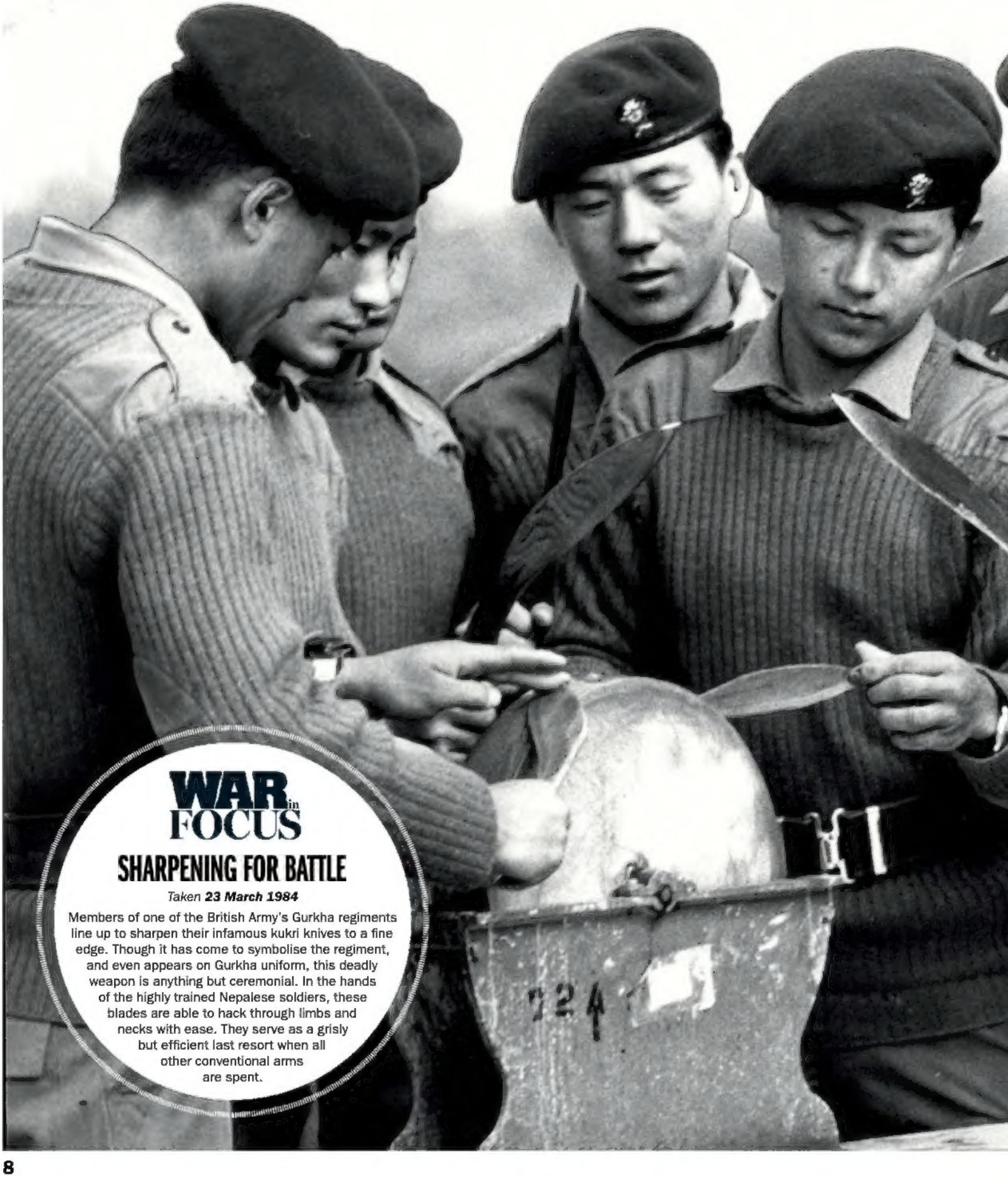
WAR in FOCUS

SEAS OF RED

Taken ***16 October 2014***

Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip walk through the Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red installation in the moat of the Tower of London. The art project to commemorate the beginning of the First World War used over 888,246 ceramic poppies, each representing a British fatality during the conflict. Donations raised by the project went towards a number of military charities including Help for Heroes, The Royal British Legion and Combat Stress.

REX/Geoff Pugh



WAR in FOCUS

SHARPENING FOR BATTLE

Taken ***23 March 1984***

Members of one of the British Army's Gurkha regiments line up to sharpen their infamous kukri knives to a fine edge. Though it has come to symbolise the regiment, and even appears on Gurkha uniform, this deadly weapon is anything but ceremonial. In the hands of the highly trained Nepalese soldiers, these blades are able to hack through limbs and necks with ease. They serve as a grisly but efficient last resort when all other conventional arms are spent.

REX/Mike Hollist / Associated Newspapers

WAR in FOCUS

FIRE FOR EFFECT

Taken ***May 1945***

With a range of around 40 yards, this terrifying flame-throwing tank was developed by the Army Chemical Warfare Service. Pictured during manoeuvres at Fort Benning, Georgia, the flame-thrower fits into the standard machine gun mount under the turret. Many Allied and Axis tanks were altered to shoot flame during WWII.

WAR in FOCUS

SCOTLAND FOREVER!

Painted ***1881***

This dramatic 1881 painting by Elizabeth Butler shows the start of the cavalry charge of the Royal Scots Greys at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815. Though in reality the charge began more at a fast walk over the rough ground of the battlefield, Butler's portrayal of a chaotic and impassioned cavalry charge has become iconic. The Scots Greys' devastating attack was a key moment in the battle and led Napoleon to comment: "Ah, ces terribles chevaux gris."

Frontline

THE SPECIAL FORCES

From the ancient world to the 21st Century, special forces have undertaken the most dangerous and daring of missions.

NAVY SEALS 1962

ELITE OPERATORS WITH A GLOBAL REACH

Country United States

The SEALs can trace their origin to the Amphibious Scout and Raider School formed in response to the bloody attack on Pearl Harbour during WWII. The fight against communism gave birth to the modern-day Navy SEALs, and the force carried out many reconnaissance missions in Cuba and Vietnam. Using the most-sophisticated equipment, the SEALs are specialised at completing missions in extreme conditions – from the remote mountains of Afghanistan to the freezing Arctic.

The SEAL 'paints' the target with a AN-PAQ-1 laser designator, marking it out for an air strike.

Navy SEAL kit prepares them for any eventuality.

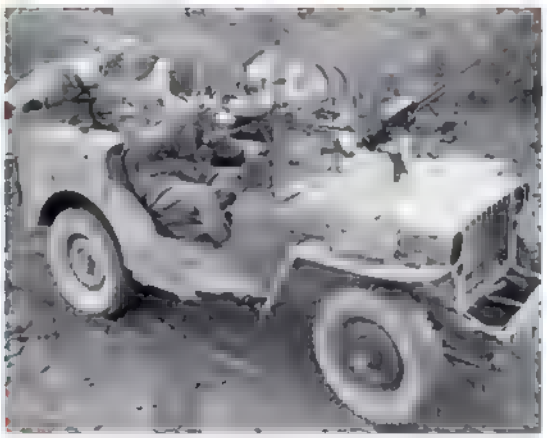
The Roman infantry helmet was augmented with a leather strip and decorative feathers.

Shields were either curved, or straight-sided like this one, and daubed in bright colours.

1ST CENTURY BCE TO 4TH CENTURY CE

FEARLESS ANCIENT GERMANIC SHOCK TROOPS

Roman Empire



SAS 1941

THE BLUEPRINT FOR MODERN SPECIAL FORCES

Country United Kingdom

The SAS was formed during World War II and was initially used to complete missions behind enemy lines. The units carried out many sabotage missions during the war, such as destroying enemy harbours, storage bases and airfields. Recognised as setting the model for all future special forces around the world, the SAS is now split into four squadrons with a wide range of specialities.

NINJAS *15TH CENTURY*

SECRETIVE ASSASSINS OF THE SHADOWS

Country Japan

Ninjas were created in opposition to the Samurai who committed all their deeds in an open, 'respectful' way. Ninjas were specially trained to complete covert deeds and were hired as spies, scouts and terrorists. These highly trained warriors were recruited by Shogun leaders to complete reconnaissance missions against their enemies and were especially skilled at espionage, sabotage and assassination.

BRITISH COMMANDOS *1940*

ULTIMATE UNIT FOR DISRUPTION AND SABOTAGE

Country United Kingdom

The Commandos were formed at the request of Prime Minister Winston Churchill to carry out raids, cause German casualties and raise British morale during WWII. These specially trained troops were separated into distinct units, each with specialised skill sets, from parachuting to intelligence gathering and even a canoe unit used to attack shipping.

The black shinobi shozoku outfit was most likely worn for night attacks, if at all.

The woollen cap comforter can be easily rolled down and transformed into a scarf.

Often laden down with kit, the Commando was outfitted for long haul missions.

As with the Samurai, the Ninja's favoured close combat weapon was the katana.

The iconic Thompson submachine gun was deadly at short range.

Ninja carried a grappling hook, along with other tools for infiltration.

The split-toed sock, or tabi, was worn by many in feudal Japan.

5 Facts about SPECIAL FORCES

NOT ALL SPECIAL FORCES ARE SOLDIERS

The abilities of special force medics are just as extraordinary as their commando counterparts. These incredible doctors have an impressive set of skills from surgery, dentistry and vaccination, to delivering babies. Some are even trained veterinarians.

A MAMMOTH SPECIAL FORCE

The largest special force unit in the world belongs to North Korea. Numbering 180,000 members, the highly trained soldiers of the Special Operations Force are lethal operators and go on regular reconnaissance missions around the north-south border.

BRITISH GREEN BERET

Although the green beret is now firmly associated with the United States special forces, it originated from WWII British army commandos. The American soldiers who passed the intense British commando course were given the beret and its association with the American commandos developed

THE SPECIAL FORCES GO NUCLEAR

There was a plan put in place during the Cold War in the event of the Soviet Union invading Europe. Special forces soldiers were to parachute while strapped to atomic bombs, committing nuclear suicide to stop the invasion.

FAMOUS FACES

Many celebrities, such as Christopher Lee, Bear Grylls, Paddy Ashdown and Ian Fleming, were involved in special forces missions prior to their fame.

18TH AND 19TH CENTURIES

TROOPS WITH NERVES OF STEEL AND SKILLS TO MATCH

France

LOVAT SCOUTS *1900*

EXPERTS AT COVERT OPERATIONS

Country United Kingdom

The Lovat Scouts were formed during the Second Boer War, when the army realised the advantage that specialised units would bring. A Scottish Highland regiment, these highly skilled marksmen became the first sniper unit and were the first to wear ghillie suits. During WWII the Lovat Scouts protected the country from the German invasion from the Faroe Islands, bringing down a Luftwaffe bomber and capturing the crew.

Frontline

SPECIAL FORCES OF THE WORLD

Your guide to the globe's greatest commando units

JTF2
Founded: 1993
Speciality: Counter-terrorism
Location: Canada

Danish Frogman Corps
Founded: 1957
Speciality: Diving
Location: Denmark

Special Forces Group
Founded: 2003
Speciality: Paracommando
Location: Belgium

MJK
Founded: 1953
Speciality: Amphibious
Location: Norway

SAS
Founded: 1945
Speciality: Airborne
Location: United Kingdom

United States Army Special Forces
Founded: 1952
Speciality: Unconventional warfare
Location: United States

SRR
Founded: 2005
Speciality: Surveillance and reconnaissance
Location: United Kingdom

Kampfschwimme
Founded: 1958
Speciality: Amphibious
Location: Germany

Commandos Marine
Founded: 1947
Speciality: Amphibious
Location: France

Shayetet 13
Founded: 1948
Speciality: Counter-terrorism, maritime
Location: Israel

South African Special Forces Brigade
Founded: 1972
Speciality: Reconnaissance, counter-terrorism
Location: South Africa

Para-SAR
Founded: 1965
Speciality: Parachute search and rescue
Location: Brazil

1 OPERATION CHAVÍN DE HUÁNTAR

LIMA 22 APRIL 1997

14 members of the MRTA, a South American revolutionary movement, have taken hundreds of diplomats hostage at the Japanese for 126 days. 142 Peruvian commandos storm the embassy and rescue all but one hostage.

2 OPERATION ENTEBBE

UGANDA 4 JULY 1976

A week ago an Air France plane was hijacked by the terrorist Palestinian group PFLP-EO. Idi Amin has welcomed the hijackers to Uganda. 100 Israeli commandos travel by night and rescue 102 of the 106 hostages in 90 minutes.

4 OPERATION FRANKTON

FRANCE
7-10 DECEMBER 1942

The Bay of Biscay port of Bordeaux is a vital destination for goods that support the German war effort. 13 Royal Marines Commandos of the RMBPD in six canoes attack docked ships with mines, sinking one and causing mass disruption.

5 THE GRAN SASSO RAID

ITALY
12 SEPTEMBER 1943

Italian dictator Benito Mussolini is imprisoned high in the Apennine Mountains after the king, Vittor Emmanuel III, had him arrested. German paratroopers ambush the dictator's captors and Mussolini is handed over without a single shot being fired.

Italian fascist leader Benito Mussolini is led to freedom by German paratroopers and Waffen-SS commandos.

Republic of Korea Naval Special Warfare Flotilla
Founded: **1955**
Speciality: **Amphibious**
Location: **South Korea**

Russian Marine Commando
Founded: **1941**
Speciality: **Amphibious**
Location: **Russia**

6 OPERATION NIMROD

LONDON 30 APRIL - 5 MAY 1980

Six armed members of the Iranian Arab group DRFLA have taken 26 people hostage in London's Iranian embassy. SAS soldiers abseil from the roof into the building and in a short 17 minutes they have rescued all but one hostage and killed five of the terrorists.

7 OPERATION BARRAS

SIERRA LEONE
10 SEPTEMBER 2000

11 British service men have been taken hostage by the armed Sierra rebels West Side Boys. A combined force of 75 SAS and SBS infiltrate the enemy base and rescue the soldiers, as well as 21 civilians.

MARCOS
Founded: **1987**
Speciality: **Amphibious warfare, counter-terrorism**
Location: **India**

8

US President Barack Obama (second from left) watches a live feed of Operation Neptune Star, where Osama Bin Laden is killed

People's Liberation Army Special Operations Forces
Founded: **1988**
Speciality: **Rapid reaction combat**
Location: **China**

3 ZEEBRUGGE RAID

BELGIUM 23 APRIL 1918

The Belgium port of Bruges-Zeebrugge is being used as a U-boat port by German forces. A small force of British Royal Marines manage to block the entrance for a few days at the cost of 227 men.

SASR
Founded: **1957**
Speciality: **Airborne**
Location: **Australia**

NZSAS
Founded: **1955**
Speciality: **Airborne**
Location: **New Zealand**

8 OPERATION NEPTUNE SPEAR

PAKISTAN 2 MAY 2011

US intelligence have identified the location of Al-Qaeda leader Osama Bin Laden. 79 commandos of the US Navy SEALs infiltrate the compound and locate Bin Laden, he resists arrest and is shot dead.

SAS LONG-RANGE PATROL VEHICLE

The regiment's most-iconic 4x4 was used for nearly 20 years and had a very distinctive colour...

Series IIA 90 Land Rover
UK, 1967-1985
Engine size 2.6 litre
Top speed 55 mph
Weight 3,050 kg
Crew One driver and two passengers
Modifications Doors, windscreen and canopy, paintwork, 9x16 tyres. Extra weapons

More-modern models were fitted with multiple weapons

Leaf-spring suspension

LONG WHEELBASE
A 109-inch wheelbase (the distance between the centre of the front and rear wheels) meant that the SAS pinkies were able to carry more gear. They were capable of supporting longer-range missions than the SAS Series I Land Rovers before them.

ROBUST BUILD
As well as being Land Rover's most-iconic vehicle, the Series IIA is considered its most robust. It could weather the worst that Mother Nature threw at it and its parts were easily replaced. This is one reason the SAS used them for nearly 20 years.

"The Series IIA could weather the worst that Mother Nature threw at it and its parts were easily replaced"

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Frontline

HEROES OF THE SPECIAL FORCES

Just six of the many eccentrics, pioneers, killers and occasional celebrities who put special forces in the history books

COLONEL DAVID STIRLING *WWII DAREDEVIL WHO FOUNDED THE SAS*

Years active
1937-1945
Force Special Air Service/British Army
Country UK

"Mad, quite mad," were the words of Field Marshal Montgomery and commander of the famous Eighth Army in the Western Desert (Libya), when describing SAS founder David Stirling. It certainly took a combination of guts and wild creativity alone, just for Stirling to get his idea for a small and mobile team of highly trained saboteurs heard.

The blue-blooded officer was a part of a British commando unit in the Middle East, 1941, when it was disbanded, leaving what the maverick Scotsman felt was an obvious gap in the army's desert strategy. It would have taken time for Stirling's idea to plod its way up through the chain of command, so he decided to go straight to the top, in a story worthy of the SAS itself. Despite being on crutches, he crept unauthorised into the Cairo headquarters under a fence, where he knew he would find Commander in Chief General Claude Auchinleck. Pursued by guards, he stumbled into an office where he bumped into the General's deputy. Stirling immediately explained his idea, the deputy relayed it to Auchinleck who sanctioned it, and the newly formed special forces unit was given a deliberately misleading name as a cover: 'L Detachment, Special Air Service Brigade'.

The SAS's first mission following training was a disaster. Having parachuted in to attack a German airfield, 42 of Stirling's 61 men were killed, captured by the Germans or wounded after a massive storm blew them off course. Undeterred, Stirling decided that attacking by night and on land would be far more effective, a tactic that would prove the making of the SAS. Using modified American jeeps and bespoke weaponry designed for their guerilla-like warfare, L Detachment became a real thorn in the enemy's side. It destroyed more than 250 aircraft and dozens of vehicles, supply dumps, communications and infrastructure over the course of a year. Stirling himself left the army in 1945 but his legacy is the renowned 'regiment', which is still concerned with special operations during war and counter terrorism in peace time.

LIEUTENANT COMMANDER JACK CHURCHILL

UTTERLY FEARLESS WWII SOLDIER WHO KILLED ENEMIES WITH HIS BOW

Years active 1926-1959
Force Commandos
Country UK

The best soldiers often toe the line between bravery and madness, so history has shown that 'Fighting' Jack Churchill – or 'Mad Jack' as he was often known – certainly lived up to the rule. As a brave to the point of bonkers World War II officer, Churchill never went into battle without his trusty Scottish broadsword and frequently played his bagpipes to stir morale in his men as hostilities commenced.

He was captured by the Germans in 1944, escaped an Austrian concentration camp, immediately returned to fight in Burma and then lamented the fact that by the time he got there, the war had ended. But he's probably most famous for his extraordinary archery prowess: as a part of the British Expeditionary Force in France, 1940, Churchill became the only soldier known to have killed an enemy with a bow and arrow, when the regiment he commanded ambushed an important German patrol.

He signalled the attack by stating "I will shoot that first German with an arrow," and promptly felled the enemy sergeant with a single shot.

"Churchill never went into battle without his trusty Scottish broadsword"

Jack Churchill (bottom right) leads a training exercise, sword in hand, from a Eureka boat in Inveraray, Scotland

HASSAN-I SABBAH

CAPTURING THE CASTLE OF ALAMUT AND FOUNDING THE HASHSHASHIN

Years Active Late 11th Century
Force Hashshashin
Country Persia

Born in the middle of the 11th Century, Hassan-i Sabbah was an Islamic missionary who toured throughout Persia, spreading his faith. This was the era of the Crusades, when those seen to be pious wielded great power. Hassan himself recruited a band of Persian and Syrian disciples called the Hashshashin (the Assassins), which grew to the point that they were able to capture whole settlements.

Their key tactic from which the name has been derived was to assassinate key figures who opposed them, often in public and thus, effectively spread the message that they were not to be resisted. Hassan himself employed even more covert tactics in the capture of the Alamut fortress. Over the course of two years, his assassins converted first the people who lived around Alamut, then used his new converts to infiltrate the fortress and take it from within.

MAJOR-GENERAL ORDE WINGATE

ECCENTRIC CREATOR OF THE AIRBORNE TROOPS, THE CHINDITS

Years active 1921-1944
Force Chindits
Country UK

Wingate was a distinguished officer who served at a time when the world's most powerful military forces were forming crack units of covert operatives as the norm. In 1936, Wingate was sent to Palestine where guerilla attacks were being made by Palestinian Arabs against the British and Jewish communities in the area. Here, he formed the Special Night Squads, raiding villages that were home to the guerillas and ambushing them on their way to sabotage pipelines.

He was assigned to Burma in 1942, where a more peculiar side to his personality surfaced: he would greet people in his tent, naked, eat raw onions and garlic tied to a thong around his neck and wear an alarm clock on his wrist. But as the officer in charge of creating and training teams of deep jungle penetration operatives, the Chindits, his strange habits were overlooked. Wingate died in a military plane crash in 1944, but the Chindits successfully managed to disrupt Japanese operations in India, winning recognition from prime minister Winston Churchill.

Major-General Orde Wingate (centre) waits by an airfield in Burma with other officers of the Chindits for a nocturnal supply drop.

Jason Everman at the back of Soundgarden's 1990 line-up.

GREEN BERET JASON EVERMAN

FORMER GRUNGE BAND GUITARIST TURNED SPEC OPS

Years active 1994-2006
Force US Army Special Forces
Country US

Musician Jason Everman took two missed opportunities with rock 'n' roll fame on the chin, then went on to become a hero of another kind. In 1994 he abandoned his music career, which had seen him performing with rock bands Nirvana and Soundgarden, to join the 2nd Ranger Battalion of the US Army. After the Rangers, Everman joined the Special Forces and following tours in Iraq and Afghanistan, he was eventually honourably discharged in 2006. He was awarded numerous honours, including the coveted Combat Infantryman Badge.

MATT BISSONNETTE, ALIAS 'MARK OWEN'

PART OF THE MISSION THAT KILLED OSAMA BIN LADEN

Years active 2002-2012
Force United States Naval Special Warfare Development Group
Country US

There are two reasons why Matt Bissonnette, otherwise known by his pseudonym Mark Owen, is famous: he's written the best-selling novel 'No Easy Day' that – and this brings us to our second reason – tells the story of his part in the mission that put an end to the Al-Qaeda kingpin, Osama Bin Laden. Having been ordered by the White House to move in on the King of Terror's suspected Pakistani location, Bissonnette and his fellow Navy SEALs practised on a mock-up of Bin Laden's house, before flying out to Pakistan. The entire squad were very nearly wiped out when the helicopter they were travelling in malfunctioned. Bissonnette was in the third-floor room where Bin Laden was shot dead; the team was open to the possibility of capture, but the aggressive training of the SEALs left them few other options.

Frontline

NAVY SEAL TRAINING

Rick Kaiser talks us through the gruelling Navy SEAL BUD/S training and his 22 years of special forces experience

Richard 'Rick' Kaiser joined the US Navy at the age of 17 and was assigned to SEAL Team Two in 1980. He went on to be assigned to an Assault Squadron, in 1985, and was selected for the Enlisted Education Advancement Program (EEAP). He was awarded a Silver Star for Valor at the Battle of Mogadishu (Black Hawk Down), where he served as sniper, before retiring from active duty in August 2000. Kaiser is currently Executive Director of the Navy SEAL Museum.

WHY DID YOU CHOOSE TO JOIN UP?

I joined the Navy on September 1979 after reading a pamphlet in the recruiters' office about SEALs called "Men with Green Faces."

DESCRIBE THE WHOLE TRAINING PROCEDURE TO US

BUD/S Basic Underwater Demolition SEAL training is six months long and was held in Coronado, California. It was divided into three sections.
1. Basic Conditioning/Hell Week
2. Dive Training
3. Land Warfare.

IS IT MORE PHYSICALLY DIFFICULT OR MENTALLY STRENUOUS?

50/50. The daily grind was mentally tough each day but none of your mental toughness counted in the end if you could not perform the myriad of physical activities that were planned each day. The mental part came at night or while eating a meal. Knowing what was coming next was sometimes as hard to deal with.

WERE THERE ANY TIMES YOU WANTED OUT?

Once, on the third day of Hell Week. With no sleep and at the midnight meal (you ate four times a day to keep your energy up) I finally felt warm, somewhat dry and relaxed. I started feeling sorry for myself and thinking about quitting. The instructors, thank God, saw the class falling asleep and put us all in the cold water for an extended period of time and I snapped out of it.

WHAT IS THE TOUGHEST OF ALL THE PHASES IN BUD/S?

The initial training and conditioning of the first phase. The instructors really tried to weed out the weak. In their words "I would rather have you quit here in training than in combat".

DID ANYONE IN YOUR GROUP ACHIEVE THE 'HONOR MAN' STATUS FOR INSPIRING YOUR CLASSMATES?

Yes, his name was Brad Young. He was later fired for stealing a camera from the Danish Frogmen. No different than anyone else except better scores on runs, swims and perhaps liked more by the instructors

WHAT WERE YOUR SPECIALIST ROLES?

Combat swimmer, lead diver, breacher, sniper, sniper instructor, training chief, operations officer and military free fall instructor.

HOW HAS THE FORCE CHANGED SINCE YOU BEGAN?

SEALs today must be much more technology-savvy individuals. Gone are the days of the sniper pair going in to make the one shot. Now a good SEAL on a radio or computer can do so much more.

WHAT WAS YOUR TOUGHEST MISSION?

Training missions are always tougher than the real thing. Practice for a particular operation usually meant much more pain.

WHAT WEAPONRY DID YOU USE?

Primary weapon was a M4 or HHK 416 and Secondary was a Sig Sauer P226. Sniper rifle was a 300 Winchester Magnum.

WHAT WAS YOUR RELATIONSHIP LIKE WITH OTHER SPECIAL FORCES?

I had the pleasure of serving with both the SBS and the SAS. SEALs are naturally closer to the SBS than the SAS due to our water backgrounds. I have many friends in both services and have had many a beer at the pub.

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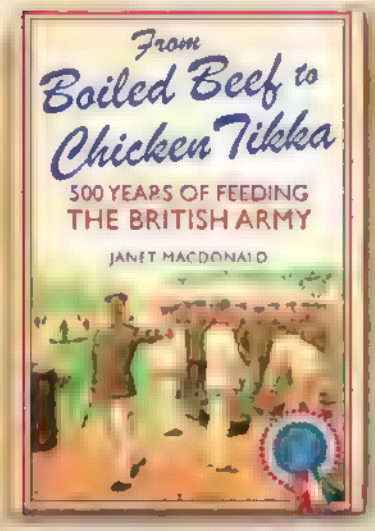

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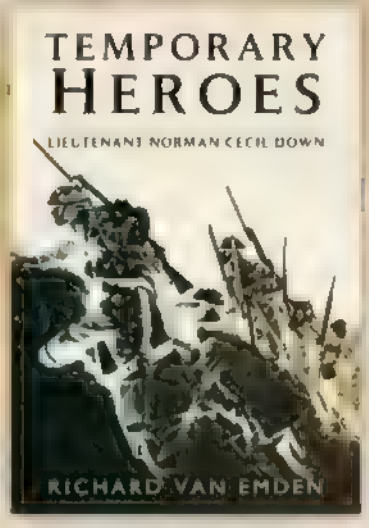

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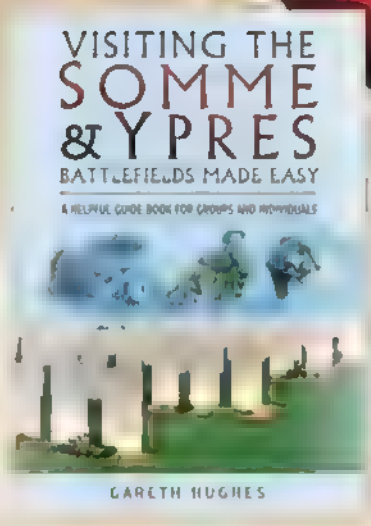

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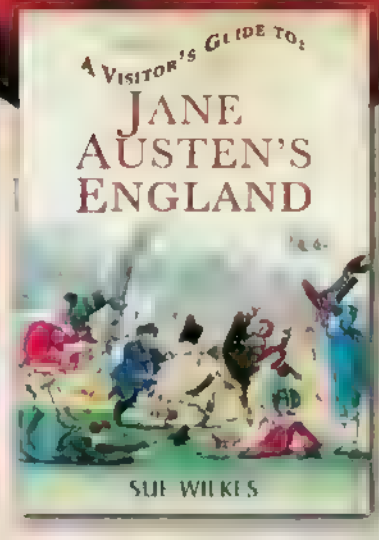

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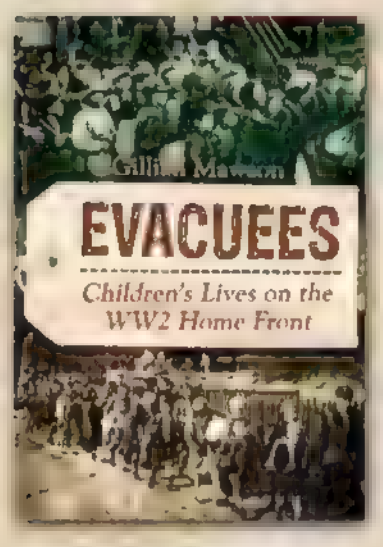

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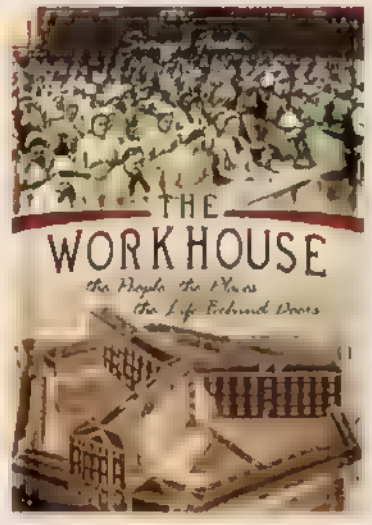

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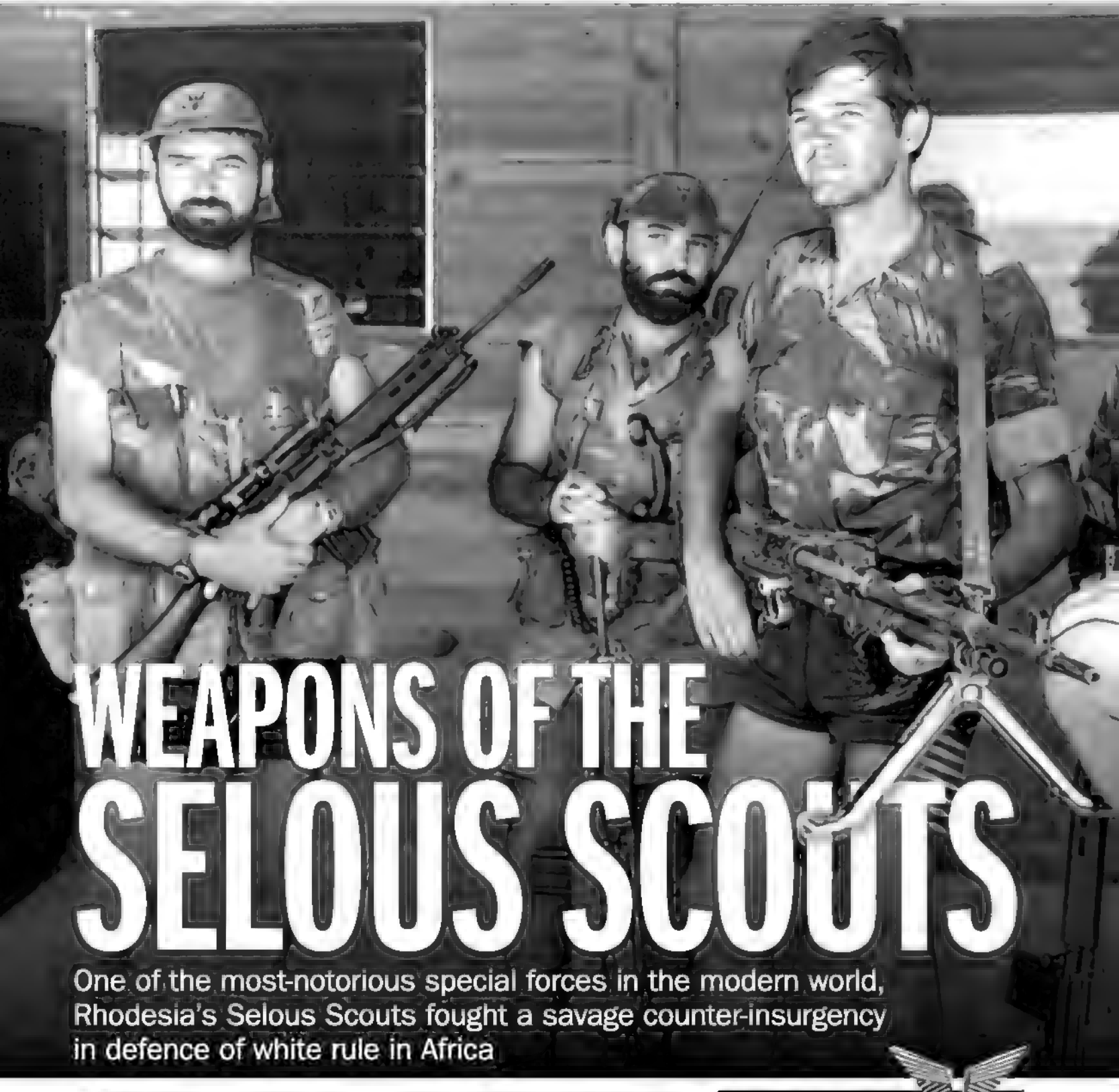


WEAPONS OF THE SELOUS SCOUTS

One of the most-notorious special forces in the modern world, Rhodesia's Selous Scouts fought a savage counter-insurgency in defence of white rule in Africa

Taking their name from British explorer Frederick Selous, the Selous Scouts were formed nine years into the Rhodesian Bush War for "the clandestine elimination of terrorists/terrorism both within and without the country." Although their aim was to preserve white minority rule in the former British colony, they were ethnically mixed between Rhodesians of European and African descent, counting many guerillas that had switched sides among their number.

Responsible for assassinations and sabotage both in Rhodesia and neighbouring countries, the unit was disbanded in 1980 following the election of Robert Mugabe and Rhodesia's – now Zimbabwe's – first black government.

SELOUS SCOUTS
COUNTRY Rhodesia
ACTIVE 1973-80
SPECIALITY Reconnaissance and counter-terrorism
KEY ENGAGEMENTS The Rhodesian Bush War

FN FAL

ORIGIN Belgium **WEIGHT** 2.7kg **BARREL** 16.9cm **CALIBER** 7.62mm **ROUNDS** 34

With greater range than the Chinese- and Soviet-made AK-47s wielded by the ZANLA and ZIPRA guerillas, the FN FAL assault rifle is nonetheless a temperamental piece of precision engineering. It has the option of being fitted with a rifle grenade – usually a South African M-962 fragmentation grenade.

GAS SYSTEM
One of the FN FAL's game-changing features, compressed gas is used to load rounds and expel spent cartridges. The speed with which the rifle can discharge built-up gasses reduces recoil, although full auto mode builds up energy too fast for the system to cope with, so the rifle can easily pull off target.

© Military Images / Alamy

RPG-7

ORIGIN USSR **WEIGHT** 7kg **CALIBER** 40mm **ROUNDS** 1

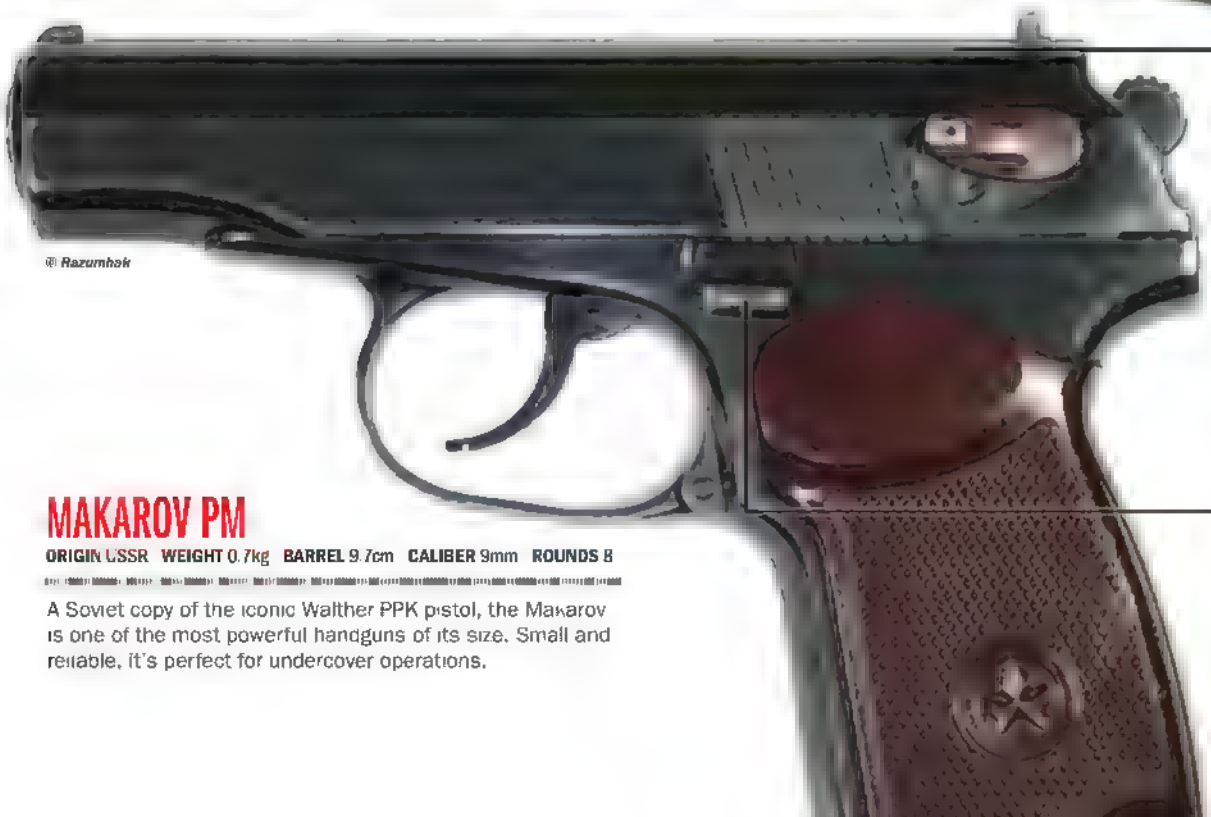
Used mainly by the guerillas, the Selous Scouts were early adaptors of the Soviet-made, shoulder-launched RPG-7. Often cut off from their supply lines, they would rely on captured weapons and equipment, and the RPG-7 was ubiquitous in Africa's post-colonial conflicts.

© Michał Manes

HEAT SHIELD
The wooden heat shield protects the operator's shoulder from the high temperature caused by the rocket firing.

PROPELLING MOTOR
A booster charge ignites to throw the warhead at 117 metres per second from the tube. The propelling motor – more like a conventional rocket motor – then powers it at 294 metres per second.

WARHEAD
The grenade warhead is usually fitted with a 4.5-second fuse, which is lit when fired. The grenade explodes once the fuse has elapsed, regardless of whether it has hit anything.



© Razumbok

SLIDE
With relatively few moving parts – accounting for the Makarov's durability and popularity in various African theatres – the slide is key. Held in place by a spring, firing the pistol releases enough force to open the slide and release both energy (to reduce heat and recoil) and the spent cartridge.

SAFETY
The safety shields the pin, preventing the hammer from striking it if accidentally dropped. This makes the Makarov one of the safest sidearms of its era.

MAKAROV PM

ORIGIN USSR **WEIGHT** 0.7kg **BARREL** 9.7cm **CALIBER** 9mm **ROUNDS** 8

A Soviet copy of the iconic Walther PPK pistol, the Makarov is one of the most powerful handguns of its size. Small and reliable, it's perfect for undercover operations.

Frontline

IRANIAN EMBASSY SIEGE (1980)

Six terrorists took 26 people hostage at the Iranian Embassy in London. The resulting siege saw the SAS thrust into the public eye like never before

On 30 April 1980, six armed men stormed the Iranian Embassy in South Kensington in the heart of London. They were members of an Iranian Arab terrorist group calling for national sovereignty in the Khuzestan province. They took a number of hostages and demanded the release of Arab prisoners, as well as safe passage out of the UK. The British government refused the terrorists' demands, and a siege ensued. With crowds of journalists and a live television crew assembled outside the building, it became one of the most publicised events of all time, with the SAS put firmly in the spotlight.

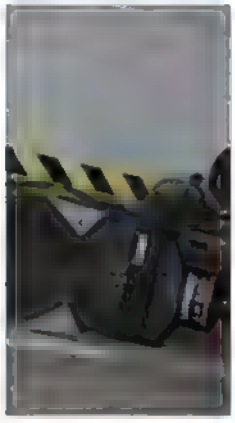
SPECIAL FORCES TACTICS

1. APPROACH THE BREECH POINT

The soldiers move in a tight line, close to the wall but not touching it with their guns in the high or low carry position. One person will always be watching behind for approaching threats. Ideally, forces enter the building from the highest possible point.

2. OPEN THE DOOR

A variety of tools can be used to force entry into a room, such as hydraulic door openers, a hooligan bar, dynamic hammer or even a magnum shotgun loaded with buckshot or slugs. These are fired into the hinges and lock, but in extreme circumstances explosives are used.



3. SOUND DISTRACTIONS

Breaking into a building can often be very noisy – many sound distractions can be used, such as redirecting aeroplanes to cover the noise or pumping ambient sound into the building. When urgency is required, this step can be ignored in order to achieve the directive quickly.

4. STARTLE THE ENEMY

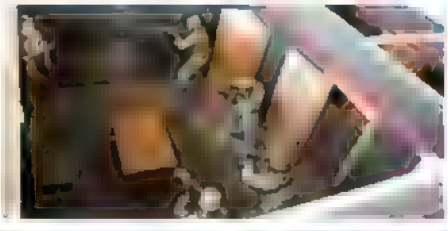
Surprise is the key to special forces' victory in close-quarters operations – startling the enemy can provide a vital few extra seconds. Stun and flash grenades can be used to daze poorly trained enemies, but such techniques will not work on highly trained special-ops soldiers.

5. DOMINATE THE ROOM

Speed is vital when clearing a room – soldiers flood the area and move into positions that will give them complete control of the space without obstructing their fields of fire. Four-men teams are standard, as more soldiers can overcrowd any space easily.

6. ENGAGE TARGETS

Each member of the team has a designated section of fire that overlaps with other members. After identifying the threat, continuous fire is maintained. The soldiers will always be moving while shooting, utilising a technique known as 'reflexive shooting'.



1 THE SAS FORM A PLAN

On the evening of 3 May, an SAS team meets on the roof of the embassy. They unlock a skylight and attach ropes to the chimneys in preparation for entering the building.

2 FIRST HOSTAGE KILLED

At 1pm on 5 May, one of the terrorists warns that he will kill a hostage unless he is able to speak to an Arab ambassador within 45 minutes. After this time passes, three shots are heard. Later that day, the body of embassy worker Abbas Lavasani is dumped outside the front door.

3 THE SAS MOVE IN

At 7:23pm on 5 May, the SAS splits into two teams. The Red team abseils from the roof down the back of the building, but its sergeant gets tangled in his rope and a soldier accidentally smashes a window while trying to free him, alerting the terrorists.

4 AN EXPLOSIVE ENTRANCE

The four-man team on the roof open the skylight and throw a stun grenade down, which detonates and shakes the building. The resulting smoke causes mass confusion and panic inside the embassy.

5 ONE MAN SAVED

The four-man Blue team detonates explosives, blasting open a first-floor window. They enter into the library and help a hostage, Sim Harris, to escape across a parapet of the first-floor balcony.

6 TERRORIST BLOOD IS SPILT

The Blue team soldiers continue through the building to the corridor, following a fleeing terrorist. He dashes into a side room before the SAS shoot him dead.

7 THE LEADER FALLS

Oan, the terrorist leader, attempts to move towards a first-floor window. A hostage, PC Trevor Lock, tackles him. Two SAS men enter the room and order Lock to move away. He rolls off Oan, who is promptly shot dead.

8 THE SAS IN DANGER

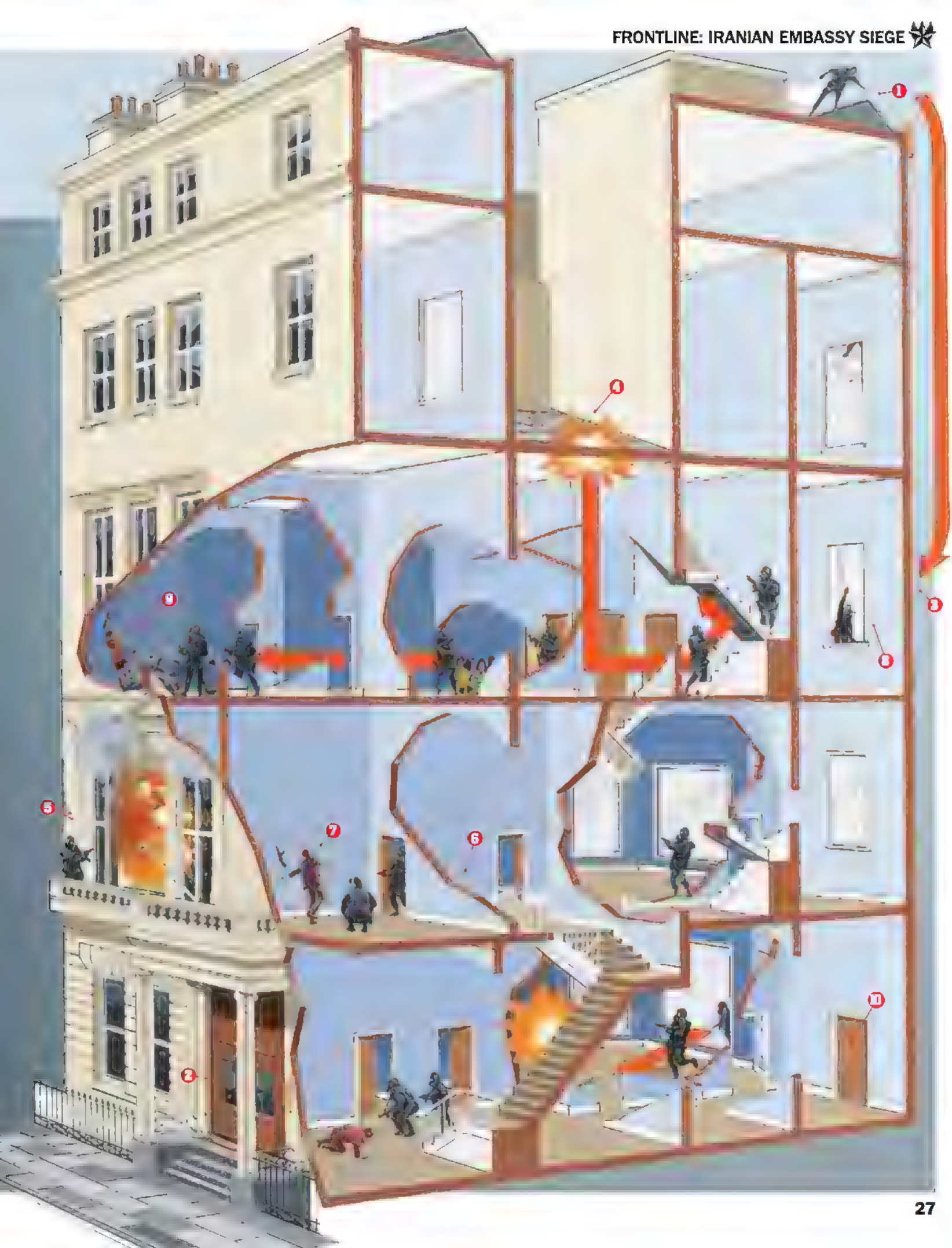
At the rear of the embassy, a fire begins and travels out of the second-floor window. The staff sergeant, who is still caught up in his ropes, is severely burned before his teammates manage to cut him free. He falls onto the balcony and enters the embassy.

9 TERRORISTS ON A RAMPAGE

Terrorists kill one of their captives and wound another as they fire indiscriminately. They hide their weapons and pretend to be hostages when the SAS enter. They're quickly identified, put against a wall and shot dead.

10 HOSTAGES RESCUED

The troopers start evacuating the hostages. They are bundled down the stairs and out into the back garden by the rear doors. One is revealed to be a terrorist when he produces a hand grenade. He is pushed to the bottom of the stairs and shot.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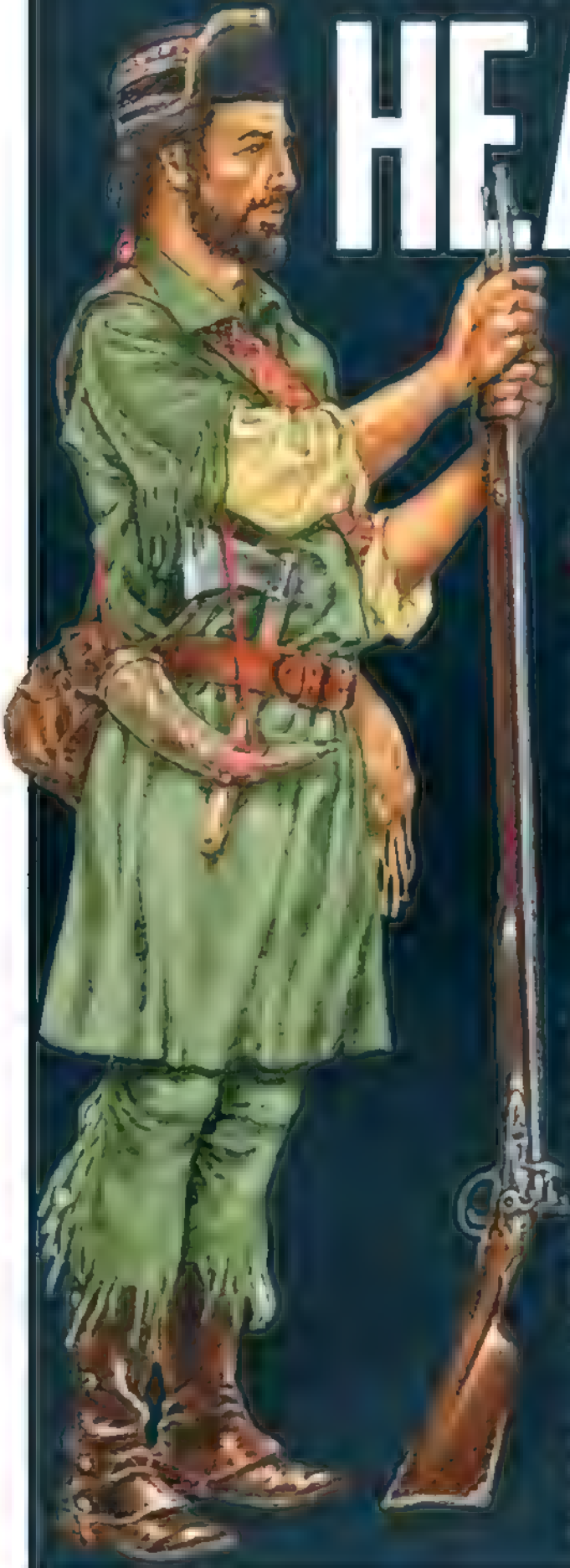
Frontline

HEAD TO HEAD

Experts at tracking, hunting and stealth, these units used traditional Native American techniques during the Revolutionary War, but which was the most effective?



COLONIAL RANGER, 'ROGERS' RANGERS' CIRCA 1758

THE BRITISH ARMY'S TOP RANGERS WERE DICTATED BY 28 RULES OF RANGING

Country Great Britain

The major conflicts the Rangers were involved in was the French and Indian War (1754–1763), the Revolutionary War (1775–1783) and Pontiac's Rebellion (1763–1766). They only suffered one major defeat at the Second Battle on Snowshoes (1758) where they lost 125 men. Their victory during the Siege of Louisbourg (1758), where they captured 70 and killed 50 enemy combatants, was one of their greatest achievements. The Rangers quickly became the chief scouting force for the British Army, employing a host of innovative new techniques. Many modern-day special forces units claim descent from the Rangers, including the US Army Rangers.

"Many modern-day special forces units claim descent from the Rangers, including the US Army Rangers"

WEAPONS

A Brown Bess musket, 60 rounds of powder and ball and a hatchet. Unconventional weapons such as German Jaeger rifles and tomahawks were also used.

RECONNAISSANCE

Many Native American tactics were used and the rangers became highly skilled in gathering intelligence about the enemy. This was what the British most valued about the rangers.

TRAINING

Rangers underwent intensive training and had to stick strictly to a series of guidelines known as Robert Rogers' 28 Rules of Ranging. They were a blend of Native American and Rogers' own tactics.

ENDURANCE

Capable of living off the land to sustain themselves, they were equipped for a variety of terrains and conditions including mountains, rivers and snow.

MARKSMANSHIP

The Rangers were exceptionally skilled at sneaking up on enemies, achieving the upper hand and unleashing a devastating assault. These attacks were mediated by the 28 Rules of Ranging.

TOTAL

Despite their groundbreaking training doctrine and access to the most cutting edge weapons of their time, Rogers' Rangers fall just short of matching the US Indian Scouts.

The Warm Spring Indian Scouts

UNITED STATES ARMY INDIAN SCOUT CIRCA 1866

THEIR TRADITIONAL METHODS OFTEN TIMES GAVE THEM THE UPPER HAND

Country United States

The most common use of Indian Scouts was to track and find the enemy, although they also acted as hunters and interpreters. When General Custer ignored the advice of his scouts, it led to the disastrous Battle of the Little Big Horn (1878). Scouts were utilised in the Pequot War (1636-1638), the Revolutionary War (1775–1783) and the American Civil War (1861 to 1865). Their linguistic skills came in highly useful during WWII, where they would transmit secret coded messages based on their native languages. They used many traditional Native American methods when it came to their weapons and training.

WEAPONS

Traditional Native American weapons such as bows, arrows and spears would be used by the Scouts, alongside contemporary muskets supplied by the US Army.

RECONNAISSANCE

The Scouts had an unparalleled ability to track every trail, with an innate understanding of traversing across the American West, due to their lineage and traditional methods.

TRAINING

Immune to army notations of discipline and authority, Indian Scouts were deemed wild, with a possibility of turning against the army – but there's only one recorded incident of this.

ENDURANCE

Their Native American upbringings gave them the expert survival skills they would need in the wild, capable at finding water and food even in desert-like terrain.

MARKSMANSHIP

Their fantastic eyesight was able to spot an enemy at great distance, combined with the ability to sneak up on them unnoticed. This gave them a great advantage when they came to attack.

TOTAL

The heavy Native American influence of Rogers' Rangers (as well as Native American troops) is no substitute for the Native American upbringing of the US Army Indian Scouts

VICTORY!

EVERY MAN WILL DO HIS DUTY

WORDS JACK GRIFFITHS

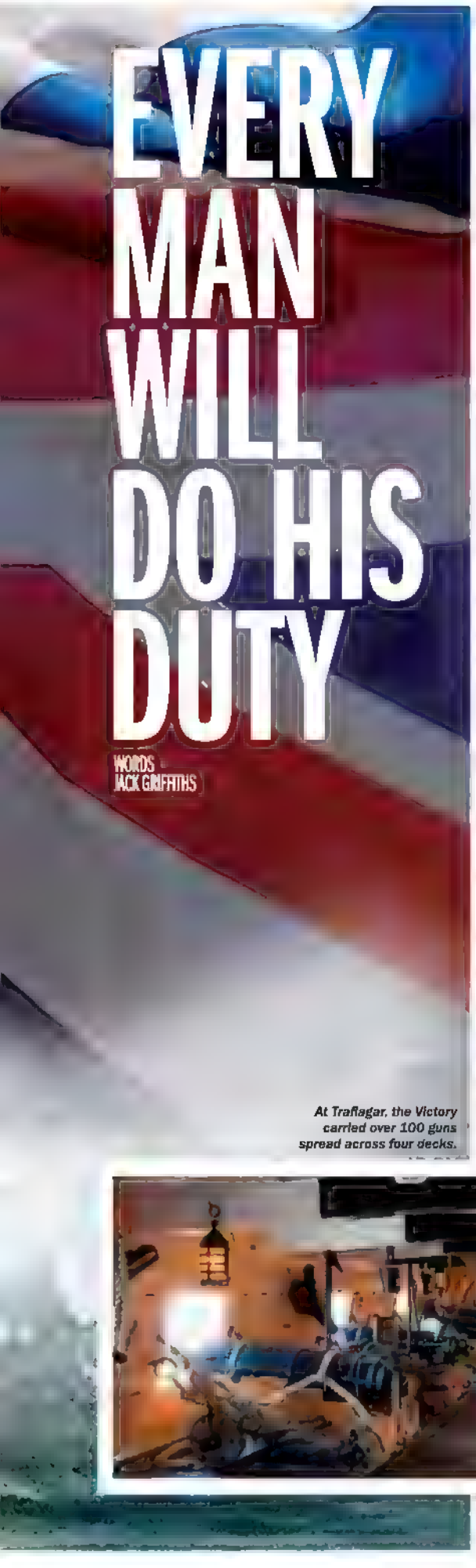
At the Battle of Trafalgar, HMS Victory helped repel one of the greatest threats ever to maritime superiority in Napoleon. We go beneath the decks to discover how Nelson's iconic battleship made history and saved the nation

A hero before Trafalgar, the battle cemented Lord Nelson's myth.

It was a cold autumnal morning on 7 November 1812 when HMS Victory's duty as a warship finally ceased. One of the greatest to have served the Royal Navy, the vessel was actually the seventh to bear the 'Victory' name, but is surely the most well known. 69 metres (226 feet) of pure English oak, the first rate ship had a crew of up to 850 men and 104 guns that could blast enemies of the crown into oblivion. Made from 2,000 trees and containing 26 miles (42 kilometres) of rigging, the HMS Victory was designed by architect Sir Thomas Slade and launched from Chatham Dockyard in 1765 shortly after the end of the Seven Years' War. She was only one of ten of its size built in Britain in the 18th Century and would have cost £63,176 – an incredible sum for the day. A classic example of warship construction techniques of the age, it was built by John Lock and Edward Allin at a time when the Empire was at peace. The Battle of Trafalgar gave this floating battle station the chance to lead the British fleet into battle with their old European enemies once more

21 October 1805 would be HMS Victory's judgement day. Would the 40 year old 'relic' lead the British to triumph or would she wilt in the face of the Napoleonic juggernaut? As the clouds began to gather, (a huge storm would batter the ships for days after the conflict ceased) 32 British ships lined up off the coast of Cadiz, Spain opposite a combined 33 French and Spanish ships. The greatest threat to British security in 200 years, the opposition also had 4,000 troops at their disposal, vastly outnumbering the British men at arms. A gifted tactician, Nelson was given free reign of the battlefield by the 1st Baron of Barham and raised the famous flag signal 'England expects that every man will do his duty' at the start of the conflict.

Naturally, Victory led the double-edged line into battle. As she steamed headlong towards the enemy ranks she acted almost as a sponge soaking up heavy cannon fire. The steering wheel was smashed and many marines on the poop deck were mowed down by cannon and musket. All this before HMS Victory was able to fire a single return shot in anger. The damage took its toll on the vessel and the great ship became unable to sail after only two hours' engagement, with the mizzen topmast



At Trafalgar, the Victory carried over 100 guns spread across four decks.

Nelson's cabin was fit for an admiral, occupying a quarter of the Upper Gun Deck.

and its studding sails completely shot away. The officer class were also in the line of fire with Nelson's secretary, John Scott, literally cut in two by a well aimed shot. It would have been boarded by the French if the second-rate ship, HMS Temeraire, hadn't fired an expertly timed broadside at the ready to board troops. Tragically, the flagship had been incapacitated as the French and Spanish again drew closer

In the heat of battle, it was essential that the men on board had experienced heads on their shoulders. Victory's crew were all of varied expertise, but the vast majority had seafaring experience at the time of Trafalgar. With the Empire growing rapidly, a navy was needed to protect its ever-expanding territories so the job as a sailor was an attractive one in 19th Century Britain. Scurvy, the long time enemy of the mariner, was now well known so the men were readily supplied with vegetables and each crew member could have as many as 5,000 calories a day in their diet.

This didn't mean the vessel was without its share of mutinies though. A few years before its greatest battle, two 'great mutinies', where the ship was seized by the crew, resulted in an increase in pay. Although their conditions were improved, the leaders of the uprising were hung for their involvement. Sadly, approximately 90 per cent of British casualties during the Napoleonic Wars were caused by disease, accident and shipwreck. It was in a seaman's best interests not to get wounded onboard Victory. The surgeon had an array of surgical tools to cure any ill but without any anaesthetics available, it would be a very painful process. 57 men were killed at Trafalgar with a further 102 wounded. The surgeon of the day, William Beatty, was, along with his two assistants, called on to perform operations, amputating nine arms and two legs. At Trafalgar

"57 MEN WERE KILLED AT TRAFALGAR WITH A FURTHER 102 WOUNDED"

The modern figurehead features two cupids supporting the royal coat of arms.

THE CHANGING LOOK OF VICTORY

The ship's appearance has varied considerably over the years due to various restorations. For most of her lifetime she was coloured in her classic yellow but she also sported a black and white look at one time. Her masts and back gallery also underwent aesthetic changes, as did the original ornate figurehead, which had rotted by the time of Trafalgar. In her current position in drydock, she has been fitted with less rigging and iron masts to extend its life.

POOP DECK

FOC'SLE

One of the most important parts of the ship, the fo'c'sle controlled the sails and anchors as well as being the meeting place for off-duty crew members.

LEG IRONS

If the man defied orders they would be taken to the leg irons for 300 whip lashes or even beatings from fellow crewmen.

SICK BERTH

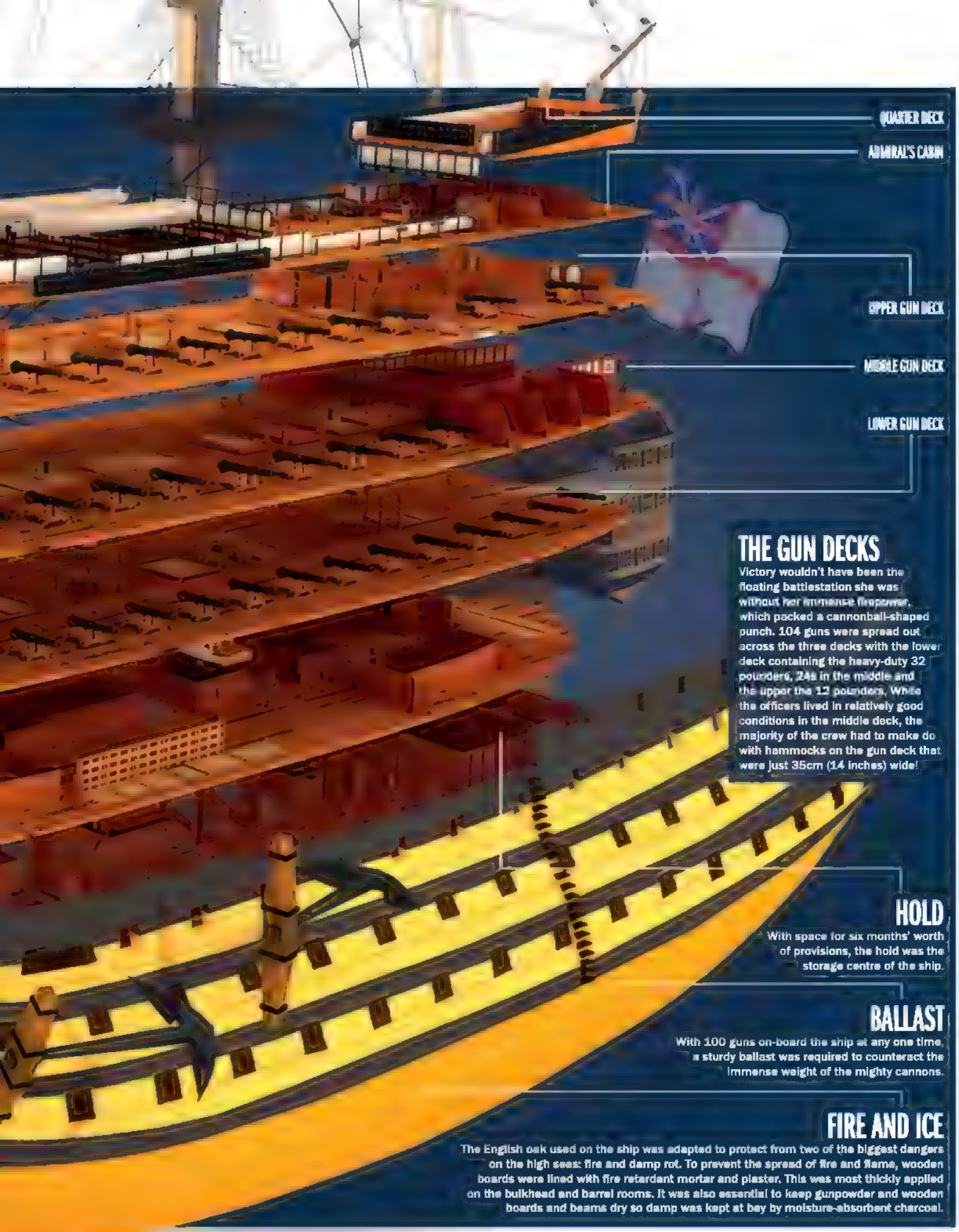
When not engaged in battle, this area would be where the ship's doctor resided. William Beatty was the most famous surgeon who treated Nelson after he fell at Trafalgar.

SIZING UP

The ship's dimensions were 226 feet x 52 feet x 25 feet. This was spread out over three decks and was a standard size for a first-rate ship of the line of the era.

ORLOP

This deck was below the waterline so was the ideal location for cabins and storage as it was almost completely protected from gunfire.



THE GUN DECKS

Victory wouldn't have been the floating battlestation she was without her immense firepower, which packed a cannonball-shaped punch. 104 guns were spread out across the three decks with the lower deck containing the heavy-duty 32 pounders, 24s in the middle and the upper the 12 pounders. While the officers lived in relatively good conditions in the middle deck, the majority of the crew had to make do with hammocks on the gun deck that were just 35cm (14 inches) wide!

HOLD

With space for six months' worth of provisions, the hold was the storage centre of the ship.

BALLAST

With 100 guns on-board the ship at any one time, a sturdy ballast was required to counteract the immense weight of the mighty cannons.

FIRE AND ICE

The English oak used on the ship was adapted to protect from two of the biggest dangers on the high seas: fire and damp rot. To prevent the spread of fire and flame, wooden boards were lined with fire retardant mortar and plaster. This was most thickly applied on the bulkhead and barrel rooms. It was also essential to keep gunpowder and wooden boards and beams dry so damp was kept at bay by moisture-absorbent charcoal.

if you got injured it was doubtful you'd survive, let alone be fit enough to return to battle.

The crew were divided into various ranks aboard Victory. At the bottom were the boys who were just gaining their sea legs and were serving a sort of 19th Century apprenticeship on the boat. Higher in the food chain were the able seamen who could tie any sort of knot you could think of and took care of the masts and rigging. At the top were the officers who supervised the deck and made all the decisions below the captain and admiral. The ship would naturally also contain surgeons, carpenters, gunners, armourers, a cook and a number of Royal Marines who provided the ship's military muscle. Two of the most well-known men aboard the ship were a father and son team who both went by the name, William Rivers. The younger of the two was a midshipman who relayed messages for Nelson while his father was a gunner who helped fill powder cartridges during the heat of battle. While on one of his errand runs, Rivers Junior was the sad victim of an enemy gunshot to the leg. He hobbled below to seek the assistance of Beatty, who decided the best course of action was amputation as he operated four inches above the young man's knee. He had to be held down by the surgeon's assistants.

Before the Napoleonic War, HMS Victory had been fitted with 3,923 plates of copper sheathing in 1780 and had two extra gunports, stronger masts and rails on the deck to protect the men from small arms fire. With the amount of damage she received, these additions turned out to be indispensable. Despite taking a pounding and losing her masts, it wasn't as if the ship was a sitting duck. Far from it. Even though there was a heavy fog shrouding the ships, Victory exchanged fire with rival flagship, the Bucentaure, and had an extended engagement with the Redoutable, with cannonballs flying in every direction. One shot killed over 200 men, with Admiral Pierre-Charles Villeneuve the only man left standing on the Bucentaure quarterdeck. She didn't capture a ship herself, this

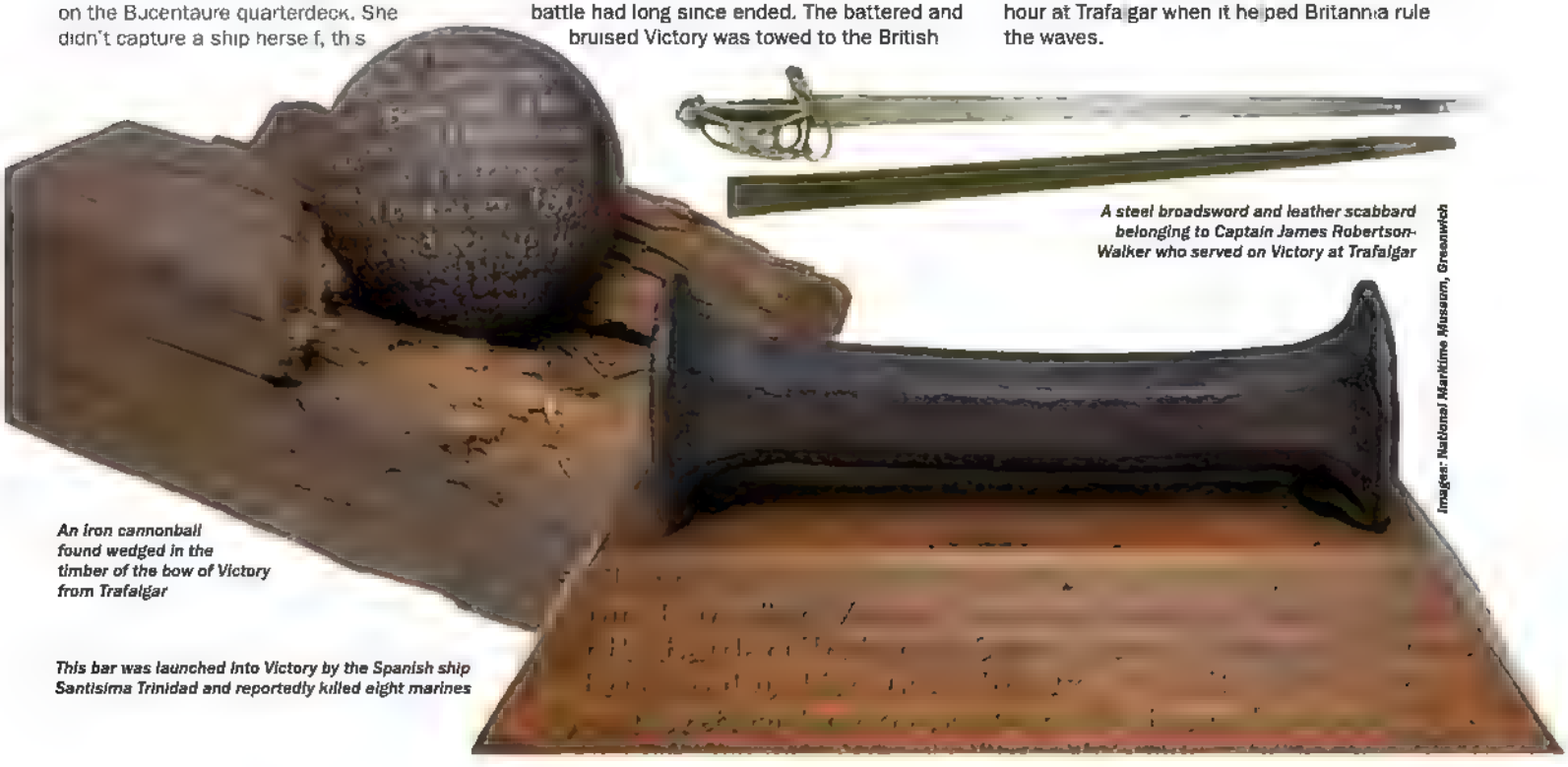
The interior of Victory's gun deck. Note the hammocks in close proximity to the cannons

Portsmouth Historic Dockyard

was left to the other more modern ships, but proved to be a constant thorn in the side of the enemy as she lead from the front.

HMS Victory was an ideal fit for Trafalgar. Her sheer amount of guns suited the British tactics superbly. Outnumbered on deck, Nelson's forces knew that if they were boarded, the ship would most likely be lost. As a result, broadside shots from distance proved to be immensely effective. Unbelievably, not a single British ship was destroyed at Trafalgar, owing much to the leadership of the captains but also the hard work of the men and the power and manoeuvrability of Victory herself.

The battle wasn't without great tragedy though, as Nelson fell at approximately 1.15pm to a mortal wound from a 0.69 inch diameter lead ball, which cut an artery in his lung and lodged itself in his spine. HMS Victory soldiered on under the new leadership of Sir Thomas Hardy and mourning was only felt after the battle had long since ended. The battered and bruised Victory was towed to the British base in Gibraltar by HMS Neptune where she underwent considerable repair work, ready to be thrust into action once more. Although it was her greatest ever engagement, Trafalgar wasn't Victory's final hurrah as she served in two Baltic campaigns between 1808 and 1812. This was a blockade mission where the new admiral, James Saumarez kept the Russian navy under wraps and generally hampered French operations. Since then, she has stayed in the naval dockyard of Portsmouth and in 1922 was put into what is now the oldest drydock in the world to finally rest. The Victory you see today looks very little like she did in the age of sail. There is much less rigging, iron rather than wooden masts and a pump house on the upper deck. Since that November day, the ship has been the centrepiece of the historic dockyard. Every year tens of thousands of tourists from around the world come to bear witness to a naval behemoth that had her finest hour at Trafalgar when it helped Britannia rule the waves.



A steel broadsword and leather scabbard belonging to Captain James Robertson-Walker who served on Victory at Trafalgar

An iron cannonball found wedged in the timber of the bow of Victory from Trafalgar

This bar was launched into Victory by the Spanish ship Santisima Trinidad and reportedly killed eight marines

Images: National Maritime Museum, Greenwich

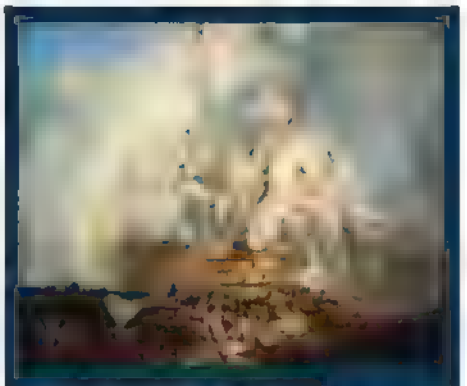
National Maritime Museum, Greenwich

A pocket telescope was essential for navigation and spotting enemy forces. An inscription on the box reads, 'England expects'

National Maritime Museum, Greenwich

The wool and silk coat worn by Nelson when he fell on the deck of HMS Victory. The coat still has splatters of blood, which is believed to be from his secretary John Scott

The hole from the shot that killed Nelson is still visible in the shoulder of his jacket, now kept at the National Maritime Museum.



THE VICTORY'S ROLE AT TRAFALGAR

A QUICK CHAT WITH JAMES DAVEY, CURATOR OF NAVAL HISTORY AT THE NATIONAL MARITIME MUSEUM

What was the Victory's role at Trafalgar?
Her key role was as flagship for the Commander in Chief Horatio Nelson but she also had a secondary role of leading the northerly column into battle. Nelson's major tactical move was to divide the fleet into two as they advanced towards the Franco-Spanish fleet. She placed herself in the most dangerous position, right at the front of the line.

What condition was she in going into the battle?
She was a very old ship and was about 40 years old by the battle. However, there had been an extensive amount of repair work completed during the peace of Amiens that preceded the Napoleonic War. So relative to other ships in the fleet, she was in relatively good nick.

How was most of the fighting done? Broadside cannon shots? Boarding other ships?
The British superiority in battle was based on gunnery tactics and its ships were able to fire more accurate shots than the enemies. The French and Spanish had much more soldiers on their ships so it was within the British interest to have a battle based on gunnery. When a boarding party threatened, this showed British vulnerability.

Give us an insight into the conditions on the boat? How did it differ to peace time?
A naval ship was a very tight and cramped place. People lived in each other's pockets. When a battle was nigh, personal possessions would be put away, hammocks hung up and guns distributed. The living quarters would become a battle station. This was just as true of officer's cabins as well. Within a few minutes, the ship could become a battle station.

How important was HMS Victory to the outcome of Trafalgar?
It played an essential role. She led the line and set an example. She was one of the first ships to engage with the enemy and during the battle it expended over 3,000 shots, which is an incredible amount – seven shots per gun per hour, which may not seem like a huge amount but it is an incredible feat of gunnery.

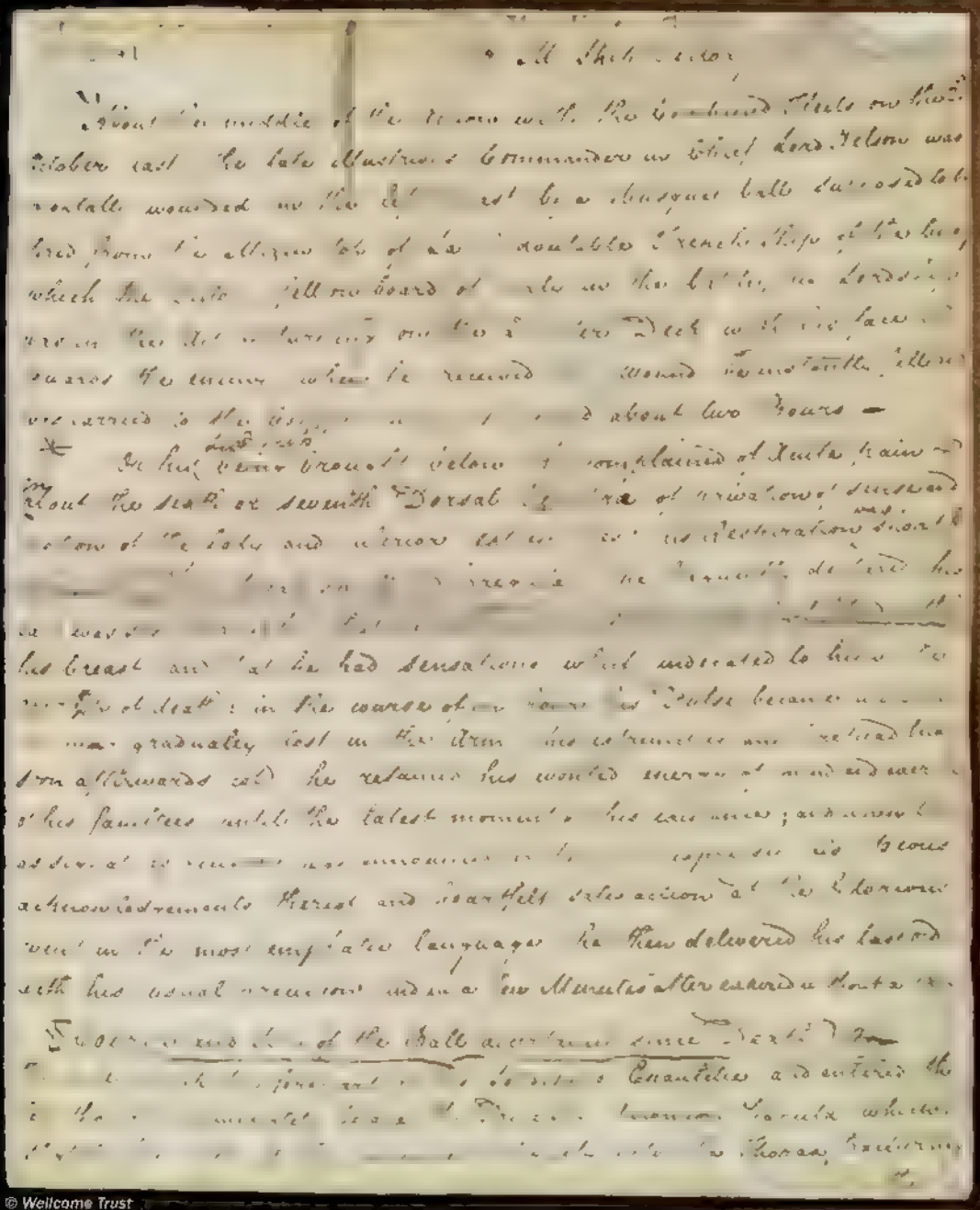
Visit the National Maritime Museum www.rmg.co.uk/national-maritime-museum

Letter from Trafalgar

The story of Lord Nelson's death is described in detail in an account written by Victory's surgeon at Trafalgar, William Beatty

The pain that Vice-Admiral Nelson suffered after his mortal wound at Trafalgar are outlined in a report written by the surgeon who treated him at the battle. The manuscript gives an interesting insight into the understanding of surgery and anatomy in the early 18th Century while also describing the exact condition of Nelson throughout the entire procedure. Beatty, Nelson and many naval figures of the time wrote detailed letters and reports from their experiences. This extract forms part of a full account of the battle written by Beatty entitled The Death of Lord Nelson and reading these today gives us valuable clues to what life was like on the high seas in the age of sail.

Beatty treated over 100 men on the day of the battle but was unable to save the Vice-Admiral's life



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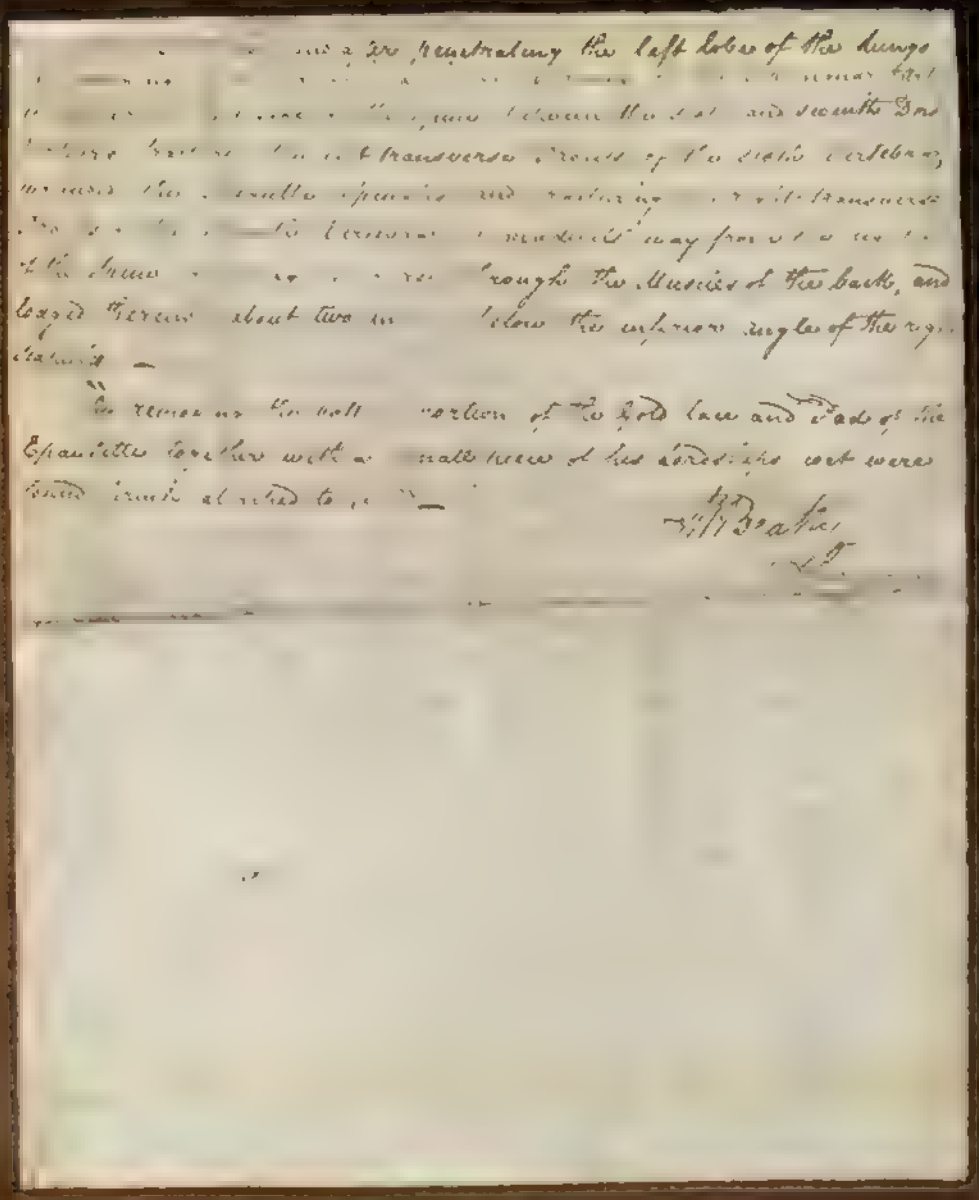


TRANSCRIPT

"About the middle of the action with the Combined Fleets on the 21st of October last, the late illustrious Commander in Chief Lord NELSON was mortally wounded in the left breast by a musket-ball, supposed to be fired from the mizen-top of *La Redoutable* French ship of the line, which the Victory fell on board of early in the battle. His lordship was in the act of turning on the quarterdeck with his face towards the Enemy, when he received his wound: he instantly fell; and was carried to the cockpit, where he lived about two hours. On being brought below, he complained of acute pain about the sixth or seventh dorsal vertebra, and of privation of sense and motion of the body and inferior extremities. His respiration was short and difficult; pulse weak, small, and irregular. He frequently declared his back was shot through, that he felt every instant a gush of blood within his breast, and that he had sensations, which indicated to him the approach of death. In the course of an hour his pulse became indistinct, and was gradually lost in the arm. His extremities and forehead became soon afterwards cold. He retained his wonted energy of mind, and exercise of his faculties, till the last moment of his existence; and when the victory as signal as decisive was announced to him, he expressed his pious acknowledgments, and heart-felt satisfaction at the glorious event, in the most emphatic language. He then delivered his last orders with his usual precision, and in a few minutes afterwards expired without a struggle.

"*Course and site of the Ball, as ascertained since death.*

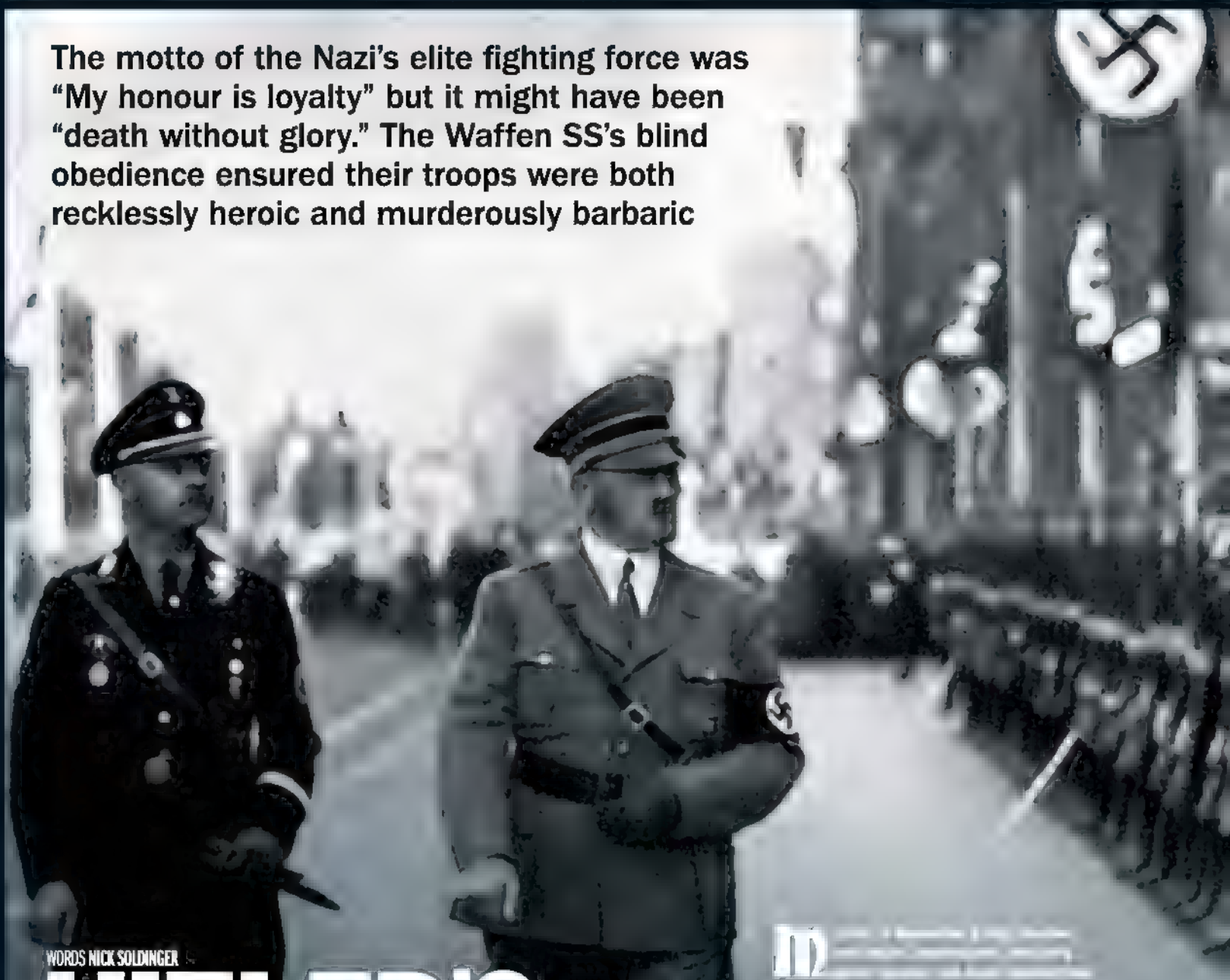
"The ball struck the fore part of his lordship's epaulette; and entered the left shoulder immediately before the processus acromion scapulae, which it slightly fractured. it then descended obliquely into the thorax, fracturing the second and third ribs: and after penetrating the left lobe of the lungs, and dividing in its passage a large branch of the pulmonary artery, it entered the left side of the spine between the sixth and seventh dorsal vertebrae, fractured the left transverse process of the sixth dorsal vertebra, wounded the medulla spinalis, and fracturing the right transverse process of the seventh vertebra, made its way from the right side of the spine, directing its course through the muscles of the back; and lodged therein, about two inches below the inferior angle of the right scapula. On removing the ball, a portion of the gold-lace and pad of the epaulette, together with a small piece of his lordship's coat, was found firmly attached to it.

W. BEATTY, SURGEON

This 1807 painting illustrates Nelson's final moments. Beatty is pictured to the left of the Vice-Admiral, searching for a pulse

"HIS LORDSHIP WAS IN THE ACT OF TURNING ON THE QUARTERDECK WITH HIS FACE TOWARDS THE ENEMY, WHEN HE RECEIVED HIS WOUND: HE INSTANTLY FELL; AND WAS CARRIED TO THE COCKPIT, WHERE HE LIVED ABOUT TWO HOURS."

The motto of the Nazi's elite fighting force was "My honour is loyalty" but it might have been "death without glory." The Waffen SS's blind obedience ensured their troops were both recklessly heroic and murderously barbaric



WORDS NICK SOLDINGER

HITLER'S Brutal WAFFEN SS

Munich, 1933. Neoclassical buildings, white in frost of the Feldenhalle military memorial – built a [illegible] before stand 800 SS men frozen in attention immaculate in their sinister black uniforms, their breath makes ghosts in the icy autumn air.

Tonight is the tenth anniversary of the Munich Beer Hall Putsch – Adolf Hitler's clumsy coup attempt that left 16 of his mob dead on the Feldenhalle's steps. A lot has happened since then. Initially imprisoned, Hitler has gone from fringe fanatic to political pop idol. He is now Germany's dictator, and tonight's theatrics are designed to both rewrite history – the Putsch is repackaged as noble sacrifice – and to thank his SS hoods for helping make it all possible. Each man is awarded a ceremonial dagger. A double-edged blade with the inscription "Meine Ehre heißt Treue" – "My honour is loyalty." In ways the SS men cannot even begin to imagine, these gifts will come to symbolise their violent and ultimately tragic destiny.

Alamy

ORIGINS OF THE WAFFEN SS

At its height, the SS was the Third Reich's most powerful organisation, controlling the Nazi terror machine and, through the Waffen SS, much of its military. Its origins, however, can be traced back to a handful of World War I veterans.

After the 1918 Armistice, when the kaiser scarpered, Germany had its first stab at democracy – but the demanding terms of the victors sent the country into a state of pandemonium. As rocketing unemployment and hyperinflation co..ded, so did rival forces, as right-wing gangs smashed into left-wing ones on street corners from Munich to Berlin.

In such times, anger always shouts down reason, and the Nazis thrived in this darkness. The brownshirts, a 60,000-strong paramilitary force under ex-army officer Ernst Röhm, was formed and unleashed on anyone who d sagreed with the leadersh p's spiteful sermons. From this, an e ite bodyguard was selected to protect Hitler himself.

Distinguishab e from the brownshirt riffraff by their black hats, the rest of this bodyguard's uniform would also b acken over time, and they'd also acquire a memorable title: Schutzstaffel (meaning 'protection squadron') or SS for short. Under its ambitious leader Heinrich Himmler, the SS would go on to extend its ma evolent influence from mere guardians of Hitler to the much larger task of homeland security, taking responsibility for the Gestapo secret police, the concentration camp system and eventually the genocidal pol cy of the so-call ed Final Solution.

From the start, Himmler sold the increasingly paranoid Hitler the idea that the SS would not only protect him, but the very vision he espoused. Drawn from the purest Germanic stock and thoroughly soaked in the extreme Nazi ideology, these 'supermen' – or so the PR spiel went – would die for their Führer. In fact, Himmler made sure that each one of them, like the SS men who'd follow, not only pledged a personal oath of allegiance to Hitler, but swore to follow their pied piper wherever his diabolical tune led them.

By 1934 the original 117-man bodyguard had become 800. Now boasting those swanky ceremonial daggers, and legally armed, they'd become Hitler's private regiment – the SS Leibstandarte. They were now ready to be put to the test.

Röhm's SA may have given birth to the SS, facilitating Hitler's rise to the top, but by 1934 they were getting too big for their jackboots. Demanding powers that Hitler believed made them a threat, the Führer decided to unleash his hounds. During Operation Night of the Long Knives, the SS swiftly emasculated its SA counterpart, slaughtering its leadership in a couple of days. Having murdered former comrades without compunction, the SS's loyalty was now proven, and as Himmler had hoped for, the Waffen (armed) SS was born...

"HAVING MURDERED FORMER COMRADES WITHOUT COMPUNCTION, THE SS'S LOYALTY WAS NOW PROVEN"

Architects of the SS

Heinrich Himmler
1900-1945

Mild-mannered but ruthlessly ambitious, Himmler was made the Reichsführer of the SS in 1929. He transformed it from an elite bodyguard into the Nazis' most formidable weapon.

Paul 'Papa' Hausser
1880-1972

Known as the father of the SS, he helped develop the Waffen SS's strong sense of comradeship. Even when in his 60s he led his men into battle, and even lost an eye while in Russia.

Felix Steiner
1896-1966

Obergruppenführer of the SS. He imbued the organisation with a philosophy of unforgiving fortitude. Repeatedly decorated for bravery, he helped transform the Waffen SS into a multinational force.

The SS Leibstandarte parading at their barracks in honour of their leader, Adolf Hitler on 17 December 1935

An SS task force is here seen rounding up Polish hostages to execute them after the sacking and occupation of Kórnik in Poland on 20 October 1939

1939-1940
THE SS GO TO WAR
UNITS: SS LEIBSTANDARTE AND SS TOTENKOPF

Almost as soon as hostilities began, the Waffen SS was flung into the front line, first in Poland, then in the West against the Netherlands and France. In both campaigns the SS displayed their infamously double-edged nature of reckless heroism with utter ruthlessness.

At first, the SS's performance drew criticism from the regular army for taking unnecessary casualties and torching villages with equal abandon during the Polish campaign. During the invasion of Holland, however, they showed more discipline, smashing through the country to link up with airborne troops, helping to defeat the Dutch in just five days.

In France they experienced stiffer resistance. Reservists from the SS Totenkopf were summoned to the front, where they joined the SS Liebstandarte in squeezing the pockets of resistance around Dunkirk. The fighting was ferocious, and when a resilient British force in the village of Wormhoudt took an entire day to budge, the SS Leibstandarte rounded up the 90 survivors and burnt them to death in a barn. Not to be outdone, SS Totenkopf troops machine-gunned another 97 captured Brits who had fought down to their last bullet at a village called Le Paradis. Their behaviour set a pattern that was to continue throughout the war.

Hitler chatting with SA leader Ernst Röhm, whose paramilitary thugs help him to power – Hitler later had him murdered

1941-45
BARBAROSSA AND BEYOND

DIVISIONS: SS LEIBSTANDARTE, SS DAS REICH, SS TOTENKOPF, SS POLIZEI, SS WIKING AND SS NORD

By the time Hitler ordered the invasion of Russia, the Waffen SS comprised six divisions of 160,000 men and every one stood on the spearhead when, on 22 June 1941, the Wehrmacht began advancing east on a front that stretched from the Black Sea to Finland. For the Waffen SS, this was the moment to shine. Conditioned to believe the Russians were a genetic pollutant, they set off with ruthless zeal on what they believed was a crusade to save humanity.

The Germans had reached Moscow by October, but then the Russian winter kicked in. Temperatures plummeted to -45 degrees Celsius (-50 degrees Fahrenheit), and the advance faltered. When the Russians responded it was the SS Das Reich that held the line, suffering 4,000 casualties. When another thrust came from the Allies, SS Leibstandarte held the line. Of the 2,000 committed, just 35 survived.

The Waffen SS repeatedly proved its fighting prowess in Russia, at Kursk, at Karkov and in the collapse after Stalingrad. Eventually, as the Red Army steamrolled toward Berlin, it was the SS that provided the resolute rearguard for the retreat. Truly, their loyalty was until death - not just there's, but their Führer and his twisted Reich.

Key Waffen SS Units

At its height, the Waffen SS numbered no less than 38 divisions or nearly a million men. here History of War takes a quick glance at the most significant.

SS LEIBSTANDARTE ADOLF HITLER
FORMED 1923

Hitler's bodyguard, from which SS sprang, evolved into the 1st SS Panzer Division. Its insignia was a key, in honour of Commander Sepp Dietrich whose surname means 'lock-pick.'

DAS REICH
FORMED 1939

Took part in the invasions of France and Russia, before being moved west again for the Battle of Normandy where its men massacred 642 French civilians at Oradour-sur-Glane.

TOTENKOPF
FORMED 1939

Initially made up of men who'd served as concentration-camp guards, its commander Theodor Eicke, former commandant of Dachau, was SA leader Ernst Röhm's assassin.

POLIZEI
FORMED 1939

Formed in 1939 from Germany's regular police. It suffered heavy losses on the Eastern Front before going to Greece, where troops killed 214 civilians in the Distomo Massacre.

WIKING
FORMED 1941

This was the first of 24 Waffen SS divisions to be made up almost entirely of foreign fighters. It consisted of mainly Scandinavian volunteers, as the name suggests.

NORD
FORMED 1941

Formed mostly of Scandinavian volunteers, its troops were among those forming the northernmost part of the assault line during the invasion of Russia.

WALLONIEN
FORMED 1941

Belgium's contribution to the Nazi war effort was led by leading Walloon Fascist politician Léon Degrelle. Hitler once told Degrelle: "I'd have liked to have had a son like you."

HITLERJUGEND
FORMED 1943

Led by the dashing and influential Kurt Meyer, one of the original SS Leibstandarte, it was made up of boys in their late teens – the first generation to grow up with Nazism.

CHARLEMAGNE
FORMED 1944

Made up of French volunteers, the badge references Frankish tribes under Charlemagne in what is modern-day France and Germany. These were among the last to surrender.

RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING

A Nazi recruiting poster encouraging Dutch people to join the Waffen SS

Although standards would drop as the war took its toll, the initial criteria for recruitment into the Waffen SS was exacting. Under Himmler's orders all potential recruits had to be in outstanding physical condition, at least 180 centimetres (five-foot, 11-inch) tall, and able to prove their Aryan ancestry back 150 years.

Much to Himmler's delight, many early recruits came from the countryside. As a fanatical racist, he saw in the German peasantry the purest strain of Aryan manhood. Many of them were also so poorly educated that they were easy targets for Nazi indoctrination. It was drummed into them daily that they were Aryans, genetically superior to other races such as Slavs and Jews, who were both weak and malign. These sub-human tribes, they were told, were a disease that must be eradicated before they destroyed Western civilisation – no mercy could be shown.

Basic training for SS recruits matched that of the regular army, but there were significant differences in culture. Although discipline was strict, thanks to General Paul Hausser – the so-called father of the SS – their command structure was less rigid. Field sports and team games took precedent over square bashing, while warmth, mutual respect and trust were encouraged between all ranks.

This openness fostered initiative – something that hampered the Wehrmacht with its strict top-down command structure. One notable triumph of this was the SS's pioneering use of camouflage jackets. Initially ridiculed, they've since become universally adopted. Hausser's innovative methods also ensured that, as young recruits grew fitter and honed their martial skills, a powerful esprit d'corps was developed to go alongside their outstanding camaraderie. These troops believed they were better than anyone in front of them, and were willing to prove it – even if it killed them.

The Waffen SS was also prepared for a unique military role. Felix Steiner, the army's director of education, masterminded the tactical training. Steiner had served as a stormtrooper during WWI and envisaged a similar role for the Waffen SS as assault troops spearheading attacks – men who were as heroic as they were ruthless.

Between them Himmler, Hausser and Steiner churned out soldiers who were indoctrinated to be as careless with their own lives as they were with others'. Consequently, they'd suffer frighteningly high casualty rates (around 35 per cent) and commit so many war crimes that every act of bravery would be overshadowed by an even greater one of evil.

"HAUSSER AND STEINER CHURNED OUT SOLDIERS WHO WERE INDOCTRINATED TO BE AS CARELESS WITH THEIR OWN LIVES AS THEY WERE WITH OTHERS'"

1945
THE FALAISE POCKET

[illegible] SS DAS REICH, SS LEIBSTANDARTE, SS DIVISION HITLERJUGEND

When the landing crafts crashed onto the Normandy beaches on 6 June 1944, the closest SS division was the 12th SS Panzer Hitlerjugend just west of Paris. Later dubbed the Candy Division by the Americans, it was largely made up of 16 and 17-year-old boys who'd known nothing but Nazism since infanthood. They were to prove the pinnacle of the Nazi experiment in ideological indoctrination.

Hitler was asleep when the invasion started, nobody dared wake him so it was late afternoon before the SS Hitlerjugend got orders to deploy. The following evening they were embroiled in the desperate defence of Caen. The young soldiers fought tenaciously, gradually becoming encircled in what came to be known as the Falaise Pocket. By 22 August, they'd effectively been destroyed, having suffered more than 8,500 casualties out of a force of 20,540, with almost all of its armour being destroyed.

The Waffen SS should have once more earned the respect of its enemies, but again shame would overshadow any glory. They may have been barely out of school, but the boys of the 12th were programmed to murder. They executed 156 captured Canadians during the fighting, as well as 86 French civilians in Ascq two months before hostilities even began.

Waffen SS soldiers often took extraordinary risks in battle. Their bravery was legendary, but their casualty rates horrific

Induction

For a recruit who passed the necessary criteria, training to fight in the Waffen SS took about six months, or 12 for officers. As the war escalated, foreign SS recruits who didn't meet this criteria were accepted and given just two weeks' training before being rushed into the line. All men had to swear a pledge of personal allegiance to Hitler in a formal ceremony.

Sports

From the start, systematic and intense physical exercise was part of the Waffen SS recruit's training. Strength building classes as well as track and field sports were routine. Recruits also undertook daily hikes and carried out jumping and running exercises. Over time, as one SS leader put it, "an athletic soldier emerged. A disciplined sport type, of supple physical stature, mentally concentrated on performance. Such soldiers are admirably suited to satisfy the special demands of shock troop tactics."

Ideology

Each SS unit had an education officer who drummed the ideological fundamentals into recruits – belief in the superiority of the Aryan race, total obedience to Hitler and hatred of 'inferior' races, particularly Jews. Anti-Semitism was heavily emphasised during training through endless literature and lectures on the subject. Trainees were also required to study Hitler's *Mein Kampf* and *The Protocols Of The Elders Of Zion* – an anti-Semitic conspiracy theory that claimed to have uncovered a Jewish plan for global domination.

Philosophy

Recruits could expect to emerge from training with a different personality. Even the sports training had a paramilitary slant that emphasised the need for total victory. The philosophical goal was to create the perfect warrior; one who exemplified willpower, resilience and national purity. Recruits weren't just being turned into poster boys for national socialism, they were being hardwired for brutal murder. As Hitler himself once admitted: "I have not come into this world to make men better, but to make use of their weaknesses."

TRAINING TO FIGHT FOR THE FATHERLAND

Weapons

As the war went on and the Waffen SS proved itself to contain Germany's best soldiers, they were accordingly given the best weapons. Entire divisions were eventually converted into armoured units trained to use the formidable Tiger and Panther tanks. Militarily, as descendants of the Germany's WWI lightly armed stormtroopers, the SS recruit was also trained to use small arms such as the KAR98 rifle, MP40 sub-machine gun, Panzerfaust anti-tank weapon, plus light mortars, grenades and flamethrowers.

Tactics

According to one Waffen SS training manual, stormtroopers were taught to be "highly camouflaged daredevils, moving forward irresistibly with focused speed and alertness." The tactical training system they undertook was therefore focused on combat, aimed mainly at developing aggressive manoeuvrability and lethal effectiveness in the field. Formal parade-ground drill was minimised in favour of field craft and exercises that were designed to improve the Waffen SS recruits' readiness for combat.

"180 JEWS, BANDITS AND SUB-HUMANS, WERE DESTROYED. THE FORMER JEWISH QUARTER OF WARSAW IS NO LONGER IN EXISTENCE."

SS-BRIGADEFÜHRER JÜRGEN STROOP IN HIS DAILY REPORT

THE WARSAW GHETTO UPRISING

SS-Brigadeführer Jürgen Stroop (centre) watches housing blocks burn after Jewish fighters in the Warsaw Ghetto refuse to surrender, lasting from 19 April 1943 – 16 May 1943. The Uprising was the most significant act of Jewish resistance of World War II and was brutally suppressed by the SS.

THE SS'S FOREIGN LEGIONS

After the Waffen SS's key role in the fall of France, Heinrich Himmler suggested Hitler should expand the SS further. Under pressure from army chiefs concerned Himmler was siphoning off recruits, the German leader would only permit a minor increase in German recruitment. He did, however, agree to a significant change in policy, authorising the establishment of SS Viking, a new division to be raised in newly occupied lands. This division would be made up of men who were from 'related stock', as Himmler – the racially obsessed former chicken breeder – put it. The 5th SS Viking Division eventually attracted right-wing recruits from Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Estonia, the Netherlands and Belgium, paving the way for a further 24 Waffen SS divisions made up of non-Germans. It was the war against the Soviet Union, though, that really moved things up a gear.

The range of nationalities that flocked to Hitler's red, white and black banners is almost as varied as their reasons for doing so. Like many mercenaries, some came merely for pay, status or adventure, while others had political reasons. Hatred of communism was a key driver for many, including the 85,000 recruited from the Baltic states and 20,000 from Ukraine who clearly believed that fighting for Hitler was a better option that dying under Stalin.

Fighting a war against a country as vast as the Soviet Union was always going to require preposterous manpower. In the event, Himmler turned out to be less the racist mystic he saw in the mirror and more the petty, pen-pushing pragmatist he actually was. He'd sold the German public as some idealised order of Nordic knights – white, blond, blue-eyed and as spiritually clean as the fields and forests that bore them. Of course, this was pure fiction. As his juvenile vision of an Aryan crusader army was obliterated on the Eastern Front by the realities of shellfire, starvation and sub-zero temperatures, he signed up anyone willing to put themselves between him and a bullet.

By 1945, an estimated one third of the Waffen SS's 900,000 men were non-Germans, with units raised in countries as diverse and far apart as Azerbaijan, India, Russia, Slovenia, even recruiting from Yugoslavia's Muslim population. These were all men who, if you'd asked Himmler ten years earlier what he thought of them, he would likely describe as "untermensch" – sub-human.

"BY 1945, AN ESTIMATED THIRD OF THE WAFFEN SS'S 900,000 MEN WERE NON-GERMANS"

The SS's International Recruits

British
Formed: **1943**
Numbers: **59**
The British Free Corps was recruited from prisoners in POW camps. Though tiny, it was widely exploited for propaganda purposes.

Cossack members of the XV SS Cossack Cavalry Corps in Warsaw, Poland during the uprising of 1944

Bosnian
Formed: **1943**
Numbers: **20,000**
Formation: **One of the many countries that contributed largely Muslim recruits – a faith, according to Himmler, that produced better soldiers than Christianity.**

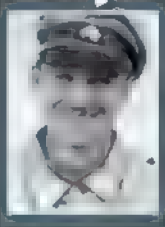
Cossack
Formed: **1941**
Numbers: **60,000**
Russian Soviets were keen to escape Uncle Joe's thumb. Its Russian cadre boasted two Cossack cavalry divisions.

Two members of the Nazi British Free Corps, Kenneth Berry and Alfred Minchin, with German officers in April 1944

Russian
Formed: **1941**
Numbers: **70,000**
The early successes of Operation Barbarossa by non-Russian Soviets hoped to rid themselves of Stalin's rule.

Indian
Formed: **1942**
Numbers: **2,800**
Intended to serve as a liberation force for British-ruled India, it saw action in Iran and later in Western Europe.

Key Officers



Kurt 'Panzer' Meyer
1910-1961
BRIGADEFÜHRER
Winner of The Knight's Cross for extreme battlefield bravery, Meyer was nevertheless sentenced to life imprisonment after the war for his part in shooting Allied POWs.

Otto Skorzeny
1908-1975
STANDARTENFÜHRER
Leader of the audacious mission to rescue Mussolini, Skorzeny was involved in operations behind enemy lines. He escaped prison in 1948 and died 27 years later.

Joachim Peiper
1915-1976
STANDARTENFÜHRER
During 1944's Battle of the Bulge, Peiper's unit murdered 84 US POWs in cold blood at Malmedy. Sentenced to life imprisonment for the atrocity after the war, he served just 11 years.

Sepp Dietrich
1892-1966
GENERAL
Dietrich started out as Hitler's chauffeur but went on to become SS Liebstandarte's first CO. After the war he was imprisoned for ten years for his part in the Malmedy Massacre of 1944.

Michael Wittmann
1914-44
HAUPTSTURMFÜHRER
Best known for his ambush on a British column in 13 June 1944, when he single-handedly destroyed 14 tanks in 15 minutes. He was killed in action two months later.

Wilhelme Mohnke
1911-2001
BRIGADEFÜHRER
One of Hitler's original bodyguards, Mohnke was appointed battle commander for the defence of Berlin in 1945. He spent ten years in a Soviet jail after the war, six of them in solitary confinement.

1945 THE FINAL STAND

OPPONENTS: 11TH SS NORDLAND, 33RD SS CHARLEMAGNE, SS LEIBSTANDARTE

The Soviet artillery bombardment of Berlin began on 20 April 1945 – Adolf Hitler's 56th birthday. By now, the majority of his once-feared SS troops had been either killed, wounded or captured – nearly half of them sacrificed in a suicide mission to recapture oil fields near Lake Balaton in Hungary a month before.

With 1.5 million Red Army soldiers slowly surrounding Berlin, the defence of the capital was left to a rag-tag army of regulars, the ageing home guard of the Volkssturm and fresh-faced Hitler Youth – about 45,000 men and boys in total.

A month before, Hitler had made what would be his last-ever public appearance. A film of it shows a decrepit-looking Führer venturing into the Chancellery's gardens from his bunker to decorate a parade of 14 and 15-year-old schoolboys who had 'volunteered' to fight. Brought up knowing no better, some doubtless did offer to serve, but definitely not all. This was history's darkest hour, and one of its more sinister twists was that, having run out of men, the Nazis now press-ganged children into frontline units. Many of the boys in that film, and many others who would die in the smashed streets and burning buildings in that final fortnight of fighting, did so because they were forced to. According to one eyewitness: "Boys who were found hiding were hanged as traitors from by the SS as a warning."

Some of the SS doing the hanging may well have been from Hitler's bodyguard – the 800 men of SS Leibstandarte, who were still by his side. Ironically, though, the biggest Waffen SS unit in town wasn't even German. The 11th SS Nordland was comprised of roughly 1,600 Norwegians and Danes, bolstered by 330 Frenchmen of the 33rd SS Charlemagne, and it was they who would play the lead in the Third Reich's final reel.

On 26 April, after losing half their men in a failed counter-attack, what remained of this international force fell back toward the city centre, destroying 14 Soviet tanks with Panzerfäusts as they dodged through the rubble. Remarkably, by 28 April, a further 108 Soviet tanks had been knocked out, 62 by the French alone. But there was to be no stopping the Soviet juggernaut. On 30 April, Hitler shot himself and Berlin toppled three days later. When the Soviets finally captured his Führerbunker on 2 May, it wasn't from his fearless 800, who by now had all fled, apart from 30 shattered Frenchmen.

"BOYS WHO WERE FOUND HIDING WERE HANGED AS TRAITORS FROM BY THE SS AS A WARNING"

THE RECKONING

During the liberation of Dachau concentration camp on 29 April 1945, members of the 45th Infantry Division discovered 39 railway boxcars full of 2,000 rotting corpses.
Shortly awards, a group of 50 Waffen-SS prisoners were gunned down by their American guards. The claim was that they were trying to escape.

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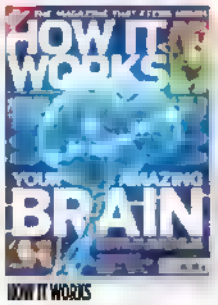

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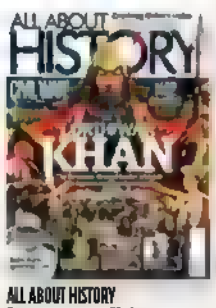

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Great Battles

GRUNWALD

WORDS: FRANCES WHITE

STATE OF THE TEUTONIC ORDER 15 JULY 1410

WHO
A united force of the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania versus the Teutonic Order.

WHAT
One of the most significant battles in Medieval Europe, one which has become a important symbol for all countries involved.

WHERE
Between the villages of Grunwald and Stebark in the State of the Teutonic Order (now northern Poland).

WHY
The battle was an acumination of territorial disputes between the Teutonic Knights and the Polish and Lithuanian kingdoms.

OUTCOME
A Polish-Lithuanian victory and ultimate destruction of the Teutonic order. The balance of power shifted in Europe with Poland and Lithuania emerging dominant.

The Teutonic Knights had a purpose, a divine right championed by God himself – they were to convert the pagan population of Eastern Europe, the entire Baltic region and one day, perhaps, the world. Acting with the support of the pope, their mission to Christianise the world began with the pagan Prussians of Chełmno Land and over the next century they took possession of most of the Baltic coast by force. They set their sights on the remaining Baltic lands, especially Samogitia, a region in Lithuania that separated the Prussian knights from their branch in Livonia. They finally got their hands on the valuable region when it was used as a bargaining tool to increase the might of the Teutonic forces during the Lithuanian Civil War in 1381. The Teutonic conquest was proceeding as planned and Poland and Lithuania were within punching distance.

As the steely fingers of the Teutonic forces closed around them, the rulers of Lithuania and Poland could little other than watch on. The knights they faced were among the most powerful and skilled warriors in the world, and they knew they could not hope to protect themselves from the oncoming invasion alone. In 1385 Grand Duke Jagiełło of Lithuania and Queen Jadwiga of Poland married in the ultimate display of union, with Jagiełło quickly converting to Christianity the moment he was crowned the king of Poland. For the Teutonic Knights this was a brutal blow – their highly public mission to spread Christianity would give them no rationale for invading newly converted Lithuania. Furious at this underhanded tactic, the Grand Master of the Teutonic Knights attempted to prove that Jagiełło's conversion was only for show at a papal court.

The Grand Master needn't have followed this course of action, as soon an uprising began in Teutonic-held Samogitia. Lithuania and Poland supported the rebellion and the Prussian

troops were forced out of their all-important territory. Grand Master Ulrich von Jungingen seized this opportunity and declared war on Poland and Lithuania. A truce was signed on 8 October 1409, which would expire on 24 June the following year. This was ideal for both sides – they needed all the time they could get to prepare their armies for the inevitable clash.

Preparations were made across all territories, spies were sent to learn everything they could about the enemy, swords were sharpened and the soldiers perfected their skills. Meanwhile, the Teutonic Knights sent out a call to all their allies across the world, and reinforcements flooded from 22 different regions, from Austria to Swabia and even France and England. Hoards of knights from around the world amassed in western Europe for what was set to be the greatest battle of the medieval age

The path to battle

The Grand Master had it completely under control, as the Polish and Lithuanians were easy to predict. They would attack on two fronts – the Poles along the Vistula River and the Lithuanians along the Neman River. He amassed his gigantic army in Schwetz, confident that from the central location he could rapidly respond to a threat on either side; all he had to do was sit and wait.

But the Polish and Lithuanian forces weren't predictable at all, as they were secretly hatching a plan that would unite their forces, then march together straight for Marienburg, the Teutonic Knights' capital. They organised raids at several border territories to ensure that the knights would become wise of their plan. Meanwhile, the Polish-Lithuanian forces met at Czerwinsk, around 80 kilometres (50 miles) from the Prussian border, and their combined army passed over the Vistula, the largest river in Poland, using a pontoon bridge and expert coordination. However, this secret river crossing was witnessed by Hungarian envoys, who hurried to inform the Grand Master.

The Teutonic leader reacted quickly, gathering his main force and riding to meet the invading army. As his men hurried to catch the rapidly travelling force he watched in horror as the village of Gilgenburg was ravaged and burned to the ground by the invaders. For him, this was the final stroke. He would deal with monsters the way he had before, with swift and bloody justice

The Grunwald swords

As the sun rises over the hill on a hot and balmy July morning, King Jagiello focuses on the horizon. The streaming rays reveal just what he is expecting: a massive Teutonic army stretching out before him as far as the eye can see. They are dressed in gleaming armour, their white flags reflecting the harsh sunlight, causing him to avert his eyes. His army is bigger, he has amassed thousands more men than his opponent. He should be confident, but doubts still linger. He knows the strength and brutality of the Teutonic Knights' heavy cavalry, its lethal infantry, its swift brute force The Grand Master has gathered the greatest knights from around the world, but the majority of his own men are armed with clubs. This was never going to be an easy victory; he would need to utilise every trick he knew and exploit every advantage given to him.

Troops from the Kingdom of Galicia-Volhynia - a vassal state of Poland centred around modern Ukraine - lead the charge against the Teutonic Knights.

Grand Master von Jungingen's face may be lined with wrinkles that betray his 50 years, but his back is straight and his mind is iron. He knows the might that is at his disposal – he has fought alongside them. Poland and Lithuania will surely fall, just as the others had.

"Grand Master!" A rider approaches, pulls his horse to a stop and bows. "The knights are boiling alive in their armour. They can't stand for much longer in this sun, they'll be dead before the battle begins." Von Jungingen lets out a low growl and peers over the field to the shaded trees, he spies the fluttering red banners of the enemy forces.

"Why won't they come?" He mutters under his haggard breath. Then turns to the knight, a sudden wry smile tugging at his lips. "It seems the cowards need a little encouragement."

King Jagiello looks up to see Vytautas, the Lithuanian commander, moving toward him.

"Why are we delaying?" He speaks sharply, his impatience clouding his graces. "My men marched through heavy rain to be here." Jagiello opens his mouth but closes it as two Teutonic riders appear in the distance. Vytautas turns to the king.

"Riders? To discuss peace terms?"

"Not peace terms..." Jagiello mutters. The knights stop six metres (20 feet) away from them and one raises his voice,

"Your Majesty! The Grand Master sends you and Vytautas these two swords. He hopes that they will encourage you to emerge from your hiding place, eliminate your cowardice and begin the battle." Vytautas' jaw clenches as the knights unveil two swords and thrust them forward. "If you require more space, Grand Master will happily withdraw from the plain or reassemble at any place of your choosing."

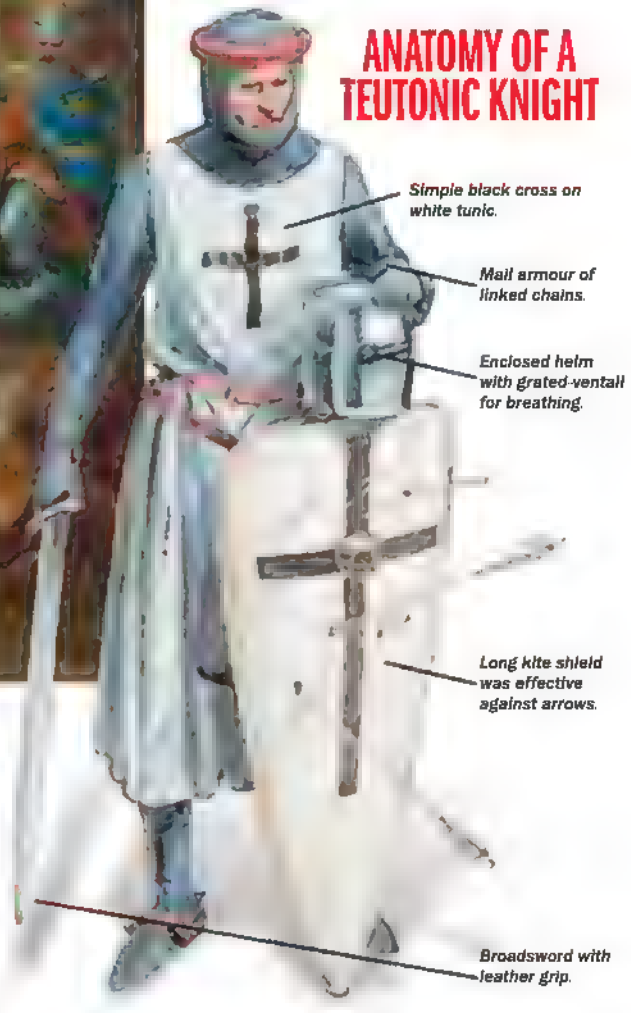
"THE KNIGHTS ARE BOILING ALIVE IN THEIR ARMOUR. THEY CAN'T STAND FOR MUCH LONGER IN THIS SUN"

OPPOSING FORCES

TEUTONIC ORDER
LEADERS
Grand Master Ulrich von Jungingen
BANNERS 51
TOTAL FORCE 27,000
GAME CHANGERS
The skills of the Teutonic heavy cavalry were known throughout all of Europe, and they were armed with superior weapons.

LITHUANIA AND POLAND
LEADERS
Władysław II Jagiełło, Vytautas the Great
BANNERS 90
TOTAL MEN 39,000
GAME CHANGERS
Many brilliant tacticians and expert strategists from around the world joined forces with the Polish Lithuanian campaign.

ANATOMY OF A TEUTONIC KNIGHT


Simple black cross on white tunic.
Mail armour of linked chains.
Enclosed helm with grated ventail for breathing.
Long kite shield was effective against arrows.
Broadsword with leather grip.

"THE DIN OF METAL BLADES UPON ARMOUR IS SO LOUD THAT THE MEN ANXIOUSLY AWAITING THEIR ENTRY INTO THE BATTLE MILES AWAY CAN HEAR IT"

Jagiełło eyes the swords and rises his head slowly. "We accept your swords, and in the name of Christ, we shall do battle."

The Lithuanian assault

With a newly kindled lust for Teutonic blood, Vytautas assembles his light cavalry and sets his sights on the enemy's left flank. "Onward!" He cries, his booming voice carried on the brisk wind. The words have barely left his lips before there's an almighty thunder of hooves as the Lithuanian riders move as one across the open plains, their weapons drawn and their rallying cries ringing in the air.

The Grand Master watches calmly, his lips curling with a smile. "Fire the cannons", he speaks without emotion. "Sire", a voice replies quickly. "The rain has dampened the power. They can't be fired." The Grand Master's fists clench on the reigns of his stallion as the Lithuanian forces draw ever nearer. He commands: "Fire everything we can."

The ground rocks as the Teutonic cannons let out two almighty booms. Vytautas winces as he prepares for more, but they are followed by heavy silence from the Teutonic lines.

"Only two?" He thinks. "Is that all they've got?" He raises his sword high and screams at the top of his voice. Almost instantly, his entire army does the same. But the Teutonic army has finally moved – with a rumble so violent it seems the very earth is shaking, the masses of white-cloaked figures charge with force toward Vytautas and his men. Their cries are so loud they deafen his ears, and in a moment are upon him. The two forces crash into each other with such force that for a moment they become one, the colours and flags indistinguishable in the sudden tangle. The Lithuanian soldiers thrust forward with their spears and the din of metal blades upon armour is so loud that the men anxiously awaiting their entry into the battle miles away can hear it.

With no order or discipline in the Lithuanian ranks, men find themselves separated from their comrades, thrown from their horses and waving their spears wildly as the mighty Teutonic heavy cavalry surround them. The expert knights of the Order maintain their formation and carve through the weakened warriors, throwing them from their horses and trampling them under hoof. Vytautas has lost

all sense of time, he casts his eyes over the field littered with red-clothed corpses.

"Retreat!" His voice booms. The few who remain comply immediately, hurrying to follow their leader as he dashes from the fray Vytautas does not need to look behind to know they are being chased. He urges his horse on as the thunder of the pursuing Teutonic line rocks the very ground he's riding on.

The Teutonic wave

As the Polish forces watch their Lithuanian allies crushed under the mighty heel of the Teutonic Knights, a large force of the white-clad warriors come roaring toward them. Standing at a distance, King Jagiełło is able to watch as the Teutonic warriors crash into his right flank. The Lithuanians are scattered and fleeing into the forest, and he understands immediately his warriors must stand alone. The fury of their enemy erupts so violently that almost instantly the royal standard that had been held aloft, gleaming red and gold, is brought down into the thick mud.

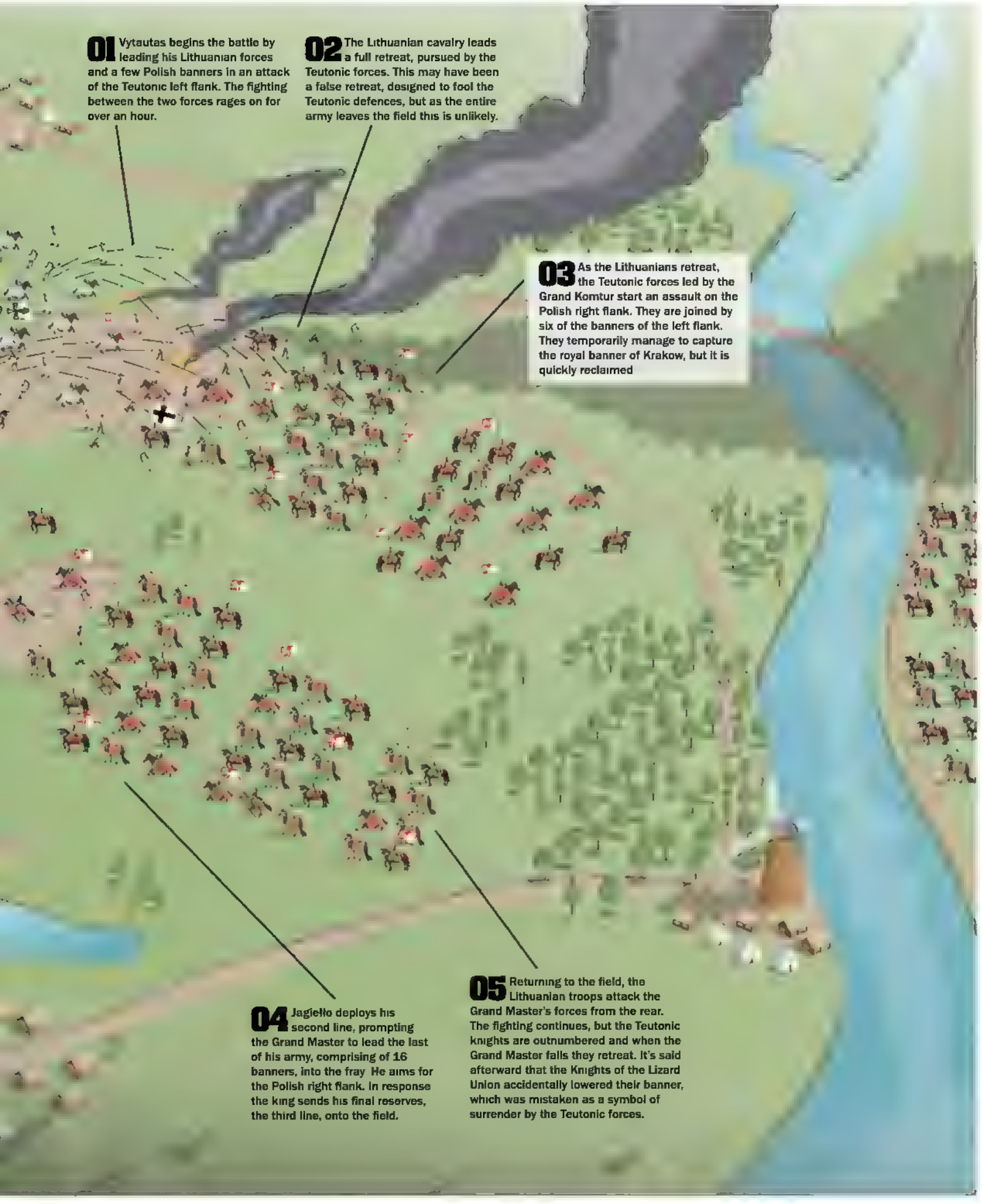
"They have the banner, sire, they think it is won," Olejnicki, his royal secretary speaks low, looking to the king. The Teutonic forces grasp the banner and hold it above their heads, riding back and forth, their victorious chants travelling on the wind to the king. His stomach turns, but when he speaks his words are firm: "Deploy the reserves."

The Grand Master watches, still seated before his warriors as the reserve Polish force streams onto the battlefield. "Their numbers are great", someone comments. "But their skills are not." The Grand Master doesn't respond. It's true that the might of his forces has driven back the Lithuanian threat, but the knights are lagging. Sitting in the hot sun and fighting relentlessly for hours has drained them. He can see their movements, which were once fast and furious, are now delayed and slack. Even the captured Polish banner is drooping in their weakened grip – they are sweating in their saddles. He needs to put an end to this immediately, before any fatal mistakes are made.

"We're moving out!" He announces, rearing his horse and facing the banners lined behind him. He has saved the largest force for one purpose – to bring total ruin upon the invaders With a yell, he spurs his horse and leads his men across the trampled plain straight toward the Polish warriors

The Grand Master's forces are exceptionally skilled and organised, so following the tactical genius of their leader the reserve Polish forces are crushed like bugs underfoot. Tired and failing, each Teutonic knight on the field is replaced by ten men the instant he falls. The royal standard has been reclaimed by the Polish troops, but the sudden brutal assault of Teutonic soldiers threatens its wellbeing once more. All the tales of death and destruction that have followed the deadly knights ring in the ears of the Polish forces as the crusaders appear before them, their polished armour gleaming in the sun. The ground is littered with Polish dead. Even the Teutonic men who have fallen have been stained red by blood, so underfoot a great expanse of fallen allies seems to engulf the field.

06 Some of the Teutonic units head toward their camp. When they arrive they attempt to use wagons as fortifications to protect them from the pursuing Lithuanian and Polish forces. But the enemy quickly breaks through and more men lose their lives in the resulting chaos than in the battle itself.



01 Vytautas begins the battle by leading his Lithuanian forces and a few Polish banners in an attack of the Teutonic left flank. The fighting between the two forces rages on for over an hour.

02 The Lithuanian cavalry leads a full retreat, pursued by the Teutonic forces. This may have been a false retreat, designed to fool the Teutonic defences, but as the entire army leaves the field this is unlikely.

03 As the Lithuanians retreat, the Teutonic forces led by the Grand Komtur start an assault on the Polish right flank. They are joined by six of the banners of the left flank. They temporarily manage to capture the royal banner of Krakow, but it is quickly reclaimed

04 Jagiełło deploys his second line, prompting the Grand Master to lead the last of his army, comprising of 16 banners, into the fray He aims for the Polish right flank. In response the king sends his final reserves, the third line, onto the field.

05 Returning to the field, the Lithuanian troops attack the Grand Master's forces from the rear. The fighting continues, but the Teutonic knights are outnumbered and when the Grand Master falls they retreat. It's said afterward that the Knights of the Lizard Union accidentally lowered their banner, which was mistaken as a symbol of surrender by the Teutonic forces.

The lore surrounding the battle was utilised in propaganda produced by Nazi Germany

The Battle of Grunwald monument in Kraków was erected in 1910 to commemorate the 500th anniversary.

Dominika Adamska

This famous painting depicts the moment when the Grand Master was killed while Vytautas is shown triumphant in the centre

"Sire," Olejnicki speaks again as the battle draws ever closer, the great assault of Prussians pushing the forces back and back and back with relentless might. "The Grand Master is leading them, the battle will be upon us in minutes." Beads of sweat run down the nape of the king's neck as he watches the cloaked figure all in white, his blade quick and his voice louder than the thunder of horses and crash of metal on metal.

"The third line, the final reserves – deploy them," Jagiello speaks low. This is his last chance, the only thing he can do, the only hope he has to stop the wave of Teutonic knights not only from sweeping over the field, but the entirety of Europe

The third line storms into the battle and finally the red living equal the white. The sudden assault of Polish forces has caught the knights off guard and they struggle to maintain their tight lines. Red warriors dash through the white defences, separating and isolating their foes into lone men. It's no longer a fight of forces, but of individual warriors, one on one. It's impossible to understand who could possibly be winning – the moment the Teutonic forces seem to emerge victorious it's snatched by their enemy. But one thing is for sure – the sea of men streams ever closer to the king and the Polish command. A single brazen knight breaks away from the pack and rides at full speed toward them, his shield red with blood and his spear thrust forward. As the lone rider nears, the king notices him too late, and can barely unsheathe his own sword before the warrior is upon him. Like lightening, the young Olejnicki moves, thrusts his shield forward and blocks the monarch from the attack. As he strikes, the Prussian falls from his horse, crashing to the ground with a crack. In a moment warriors swarm around him and finish him off. The breathless king looks to his secretary. "You have become a knight here today." Olejnicki shakes his head. "I fight only for the Lord." "Then you will be rewarded justly." The king will be true to his word and Olejnicki is to become not only the first Polish cardinal, but one of the most important figures in the nation's history.

"RED WARRIORS DASH THROUGH THE WHITE DEFENCES, SEPARATING AND ISOLATING THEIR FOES INTO LONE MEN"

The miraculous return

Now, when the fighting is so dense and fierce that the warriors can barely tell friend from foe, a figure gallops out of the trees. It's Vytautas, and he isn't a one – the Lithuanian forces are back, organised and deadly. They ride in tight formation through the trees and flood the battlefield. With a deadly thrust they stab into the rear of the Grand Master's unaware forces. The field is thick with red and in seconds the Teutonic forces are outnumbered and overwhelmed. The Grand Master turns ferociously in place, the Lithuanian return is something he was warned about, but did not expect. With the reorganised enemy swarming his forces from the rear, and the Polish warriors gradually moving forward, his mighty knights are akin to sitting ducks. There is only one option: to break through the Lithuanian lines

and attempt to launch an organised assault. He rears his horse with a yell and tears across the field, his warriors hot on his trail. "For the grace of God, we must break through their lines!" He bellows, shifting his aching limbs as the screams of his men echo in his ears. "We must!" But the Lithuanians are many, they have recovered from their previous defeat and emerged with a new ferocity.

The Grand Master is unaware of a single rider that has broken through and is dashing toward him, his lance held stern and steady forwards. Von Jungingen's white cloak is

A postage stamp commemorating the surprise Polish-Lithuanian victory against the Teutonic Order

"VON JUNGINGEN'S WHITE CLOAK IS STAINED WITH CRIMSON BLOOD AS THE SHARP STEEL SLICES THROUGH HIS NECK"

stained with crimson blood as the sharp steel slices through his neck. His limp body slips from the saddle and slumps to the ground

"He's dead! The Grand Master is dead!" The cries rise quickly, travelling down the scattered Teutonic fighters with increased urgency. The panicked cries are drowned in the victory cheer of the reunited Polish Lithuanian soldiers. It only takes a few crusaders to dash from the field before a steady stream of white rushes away from the battle.

They are heading for the safety of camp, but they don't expect the rebellion that awaits them. The camp followers have witnessed the sudden and bloody defeat of their masters and have taken up weapons against them. The Polish Lithuanian forces canter after them, chasing them to the camp that offers no safety. What began as a battle of knights becomes a slaughter – the Teutonic camp is ravaged and the piles of dead knights mount higher here than on the field. The victory is brutal, bloody and definite. The crusaders of God have finally been stopped.

Europe changed forever

As a result of the battle the Teutonic forces suffered from damage they couldn't hope to recover from. Their army was destroyed, the leadership annihilated and their prestige in tatters. Samogitia returned, but it took two more wars before the territorial disputes finally came to an end. The financial burdens pushed on the Order forced them to borrow heavily, increasing taxes and causing them to steal from the churches they claim to fight for. Few crusaders applied to join the once-great ranks and their inability to defend their lands hammered the final nail in the coffin of the army that once sought to conquer the world.

Trigger Point

THE MEXICAN-AMERICAN WAR

WORDS TIM WILLIAMSON

America's Manifest Destiny is something that is taught in schools across the globe, but it wasn't something that happened easily

Manifest Destiny – the phrase and its sentiment would soon grow strong in the fledgling United States of America after shrugging off its colonial shackles. However, it wasn't enough for this newborn country to thrive on its hard-fought freedoms while still clutching to the east coast of the continent – its booming populations and pioneer spirit demanded more.

By the time James K Polk was sworn in as the 11th president, all eyes were already fixed on the west and the riches it could yield. "Our Union is a confederation of independent States, whose policy is peace with each other and all the world," he declared in his address. "To enlarge its limits is to extend the dominions of peace over additional territories and increasing millions. The world has nothing to fear from military ambition in our Government." However, just one year later in 1846, the US would be at war and American blood would be shed on foreign soil for the first time.

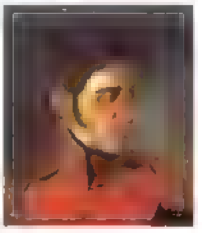
Texas sparks a revolution

After fighting hard to break from the grip of their respective European parents, the US and Mexico was each seeking to define itself on the North American continent. However, the former Spanish dependency immediately struggled to control the vast swathes of land it had inherited in 1821, stretching from the state of Coahuila y Texas in the north-east, to California in the north-west and all the way down to the Yucatan in the south. The population of Texas (a part of the Coahuila y Texas state) in particular proved a problem for the Mexican government, as it was mainly populated by American immigrants fresh with the notions of freedom, democracy and equality. Though there was willingness to join the newly created nation of Mexico, as more and more Mexican immigrants travelled the state it became increasingly clear that an American majority could prove troublesome.

By 1835, tensions reached a crescendo. Through desperate attempts to maintain control over its outlying state, the Mexican government had stopped all legal American immigration into Texas. Worse, under the new dictatorship of Antonio López de Santa Anna, an increased centralisation of power was dashing the hopes of a free democracy in the state and the country. In the meantime Texas had grown rich, with its exports of cotton and animal skins amounting to some half a million dollars. This made it a prize worth keeping or, for the American government, one well worth acquiring.

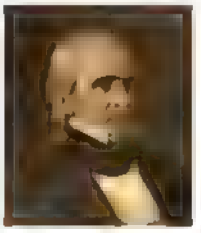
It wasn't long before tensions boiled over into outright hostilities, with the Mexican government seeking to tighten its grip on Texas. The military presence in Texas was stepped up dramatically, and when Mexican troops under Francisco de Castaneda were sent to confiscate a cannon belonging to the colonists of Gonzales, the Texians refused. The ensuing skirmish sparked the Texas Revolution, which would prove to be brief, but bloody. The Battle of the Alamo stands as its most iconic moment, where just under 200 Texians, defending their position against nearly ten times as many Mexicans, were slaughtered ruthlessly by Santa

KEY FIGURES



GENERAL ANTONIO LÓPEZ DE SANTA ANNA

Dubbed the Napoleon of the West, Santa Anna's ambitions both as a general and president of Mexico are unsurpassed in the country's history. He offered to lead the Mexican forces defending the perceived invasion by the US, shortly before announcing himself president.



PRESIDENT JAMES K POLK

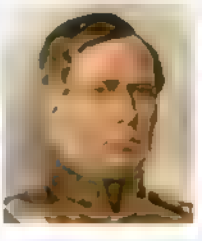
After running on a ticket supporting widespread expansion of US borders, Polk was sworn in as the 11th President of the USA just as tensions with Mexico were coming to a head. He served only one term in office, before retiring from ill health soon after the end of the ensuing war.

GENERAL ZACHARY TAYLOR

A seasoned veteran, Taylor had fought in the War of 1812, as well as against the Black Crow and Seminole Native American tribes. During the Mexican-American War his experience helped win many battles against the Mexican forces. He was elected the 12th President of the US after President Polk's death in 1849.

JOHN C FRÉMONT

Frémont was involved in numerous missions into the West, searching for potential routes towards the Pacific. While operating in California he came into conflict with Mexican populations, who saw his mission as hostile. He was actively involved in armed uprisings, such as the Bear Flag Rebellion, and became the first Senator of California in 1850.



GENERAL MARIANO ARISTA

Serving in the New Spanish army before joining the revolutionary cause during the Mexican War of Independence, Arista fought during the Texas Revolution. Soon after the Mexican-American War he succeeded de Herrera as president.

JOSÉ JOAQUÍN DE HERRERA

At times serving as the President of Mexico, Herrera's willingness to compromise with American officials in the sale of territory in north-west Mexico cost him his office. He subsequently served as a general during the war.

The Mexican General Santa Anna surrenders to Texan Sam Houston after a battle that lasted just 18 minutes

"THE MANIFEST DESTINY, IT WOULD SEEM, WAS NOT SOMETHING THAT WOULD HAPPEN OF ITS OWN ACCORD"

Anna's men. The battle, more aptly described as a massacre, only served to inspire further resistance against Mexican rule and is even to this day inscribed in the folklore of the Lone Star State.

The Alamo, as well as Goliad where hundreds of Texian prisoners were executed, quickly became rallying cries for the Revolution and united the colonists. After the embarrassing but decisive defeat by an inferior Texian force at the Battle of San Jacinto, Santa Anna was forced to surrender. It had taken just a few months for the small uprising to bring the Mexican state to its knees.

The USA moves west

Even before the election of President Polk, the US was working to strengthen its presence in California, Oregon and the disputed lands west of Texas. The Manifest Destiny, it would seem, was not something that would happen of its own accord. Shortly after Texas' successful revolution, talk of its annexation by the US was rife. The many American colonists in Texas were in favour of the idea, but it wasn't until 1845 that a bill was successfully passed through congress to officially form the 28th State of the USA.

All the while John C Frémont, a lieutenant in the Topographical Engineers of the US Army, had been tasked with finding a route from the Mississippi River to the Pacific, acting almost as the spearhead of further American expansionist ambitions. In January 1846, during his latest exploration of California, Frémont took with him an armed group of around 60. Like Texas, California was a contentious territory and was desired by Mexico, the US and even Great Britain for its potential riches, as well as its access to the Pacific Ocean.

Whether or not Frémont's presence was intended to galvanise the pro-independence American settlers in California or not, shortly after his arrival the Bear Flag Revolution sprang up to gain the province's own freedom from the Mexican state. This was yet another thorn in the side of the Mexican government, who now saw the American grip on the western territories tightening.

In the meantime yet another of President Polk's agents, John Slidell, had been sent to Mexico City to meet with President José Joaquín de Herrera. His supposed intention was discussing peace terms over Texas, which wasn't yet recognised as a US State by Mexico. Secretly, however, Slidell had been sent with a mandate to offer over $20,000,000 in exchange for the territories of New Mexico and California. When the Mexican press heard of the deal they were outraged and Herrera was branded as a traitor to his country – there

1821

MEXICO WINS INDEPENDENCE
28 September
After over 11 years of fighting the Spanish crown, revolutionary forces of former New Spain, or the Mexican Empire, declare independence from the colonial power.

1835

TEXAS REVOLUTION BEGINS
21 October
Responding to an increased centralising of power and military aggression by the Mexican government, many Texans revolt in a bid to win independence for the state.

1836

BATTLE OF THE ALAMO
6 March
General Santa Anna's army of around 1,600 surrounds a small Texan garrison at the Alamo. After a short siege, the Mexican army massacres almost the entire garrison.

1836

BATTLE OF SAN JACINTO
21 April
Taking Santa Anna's force entirely by surprise, a smaller force of Texans under Sam Houston defeats the Mexican army in a battle that lasts just 18 minutes. Texas independence is declared.

1842

BATTLE OF SALADO CREEK
17 September
After re-election as President of Mexico, Santa Anna attempts to retake the former province of Texas. His army under Adrián Woll is defeated by the Texians.

was no way a Mexican president could even entertain the notion of making deals with the Americans. Slidell was forced to leave empty-handed – methods of diplomacy and even commerce had failed to settle the situation, so now it seemed a slip into war was inevitable.

The first shots are fired

With all the pieces in place, only the slightest of confrontations was needed to set the coming war into motion. In January 1846 President Polk directed General Zachary Taylor, which he had previously positioned at Corpus Christi in the south of the state, towards the Rio Grande river. This was seen as an act of aggression and is in fact the natural border between the two countries even today.

On the evening of 24 April Captain Seth Barton Thornton, part of Taylor's contingent, set off with around 70 dragoons to patrol an area near La Rosia, nearer the Rio Grande. They cautiously scouted out the area after sunrise on the 25 April to discover if and where the Mexican force had crossed the Rio Grande They would find out soon enough.

While investigating a plantation, Thornton and his men became trapped by a vastly superior Mexican force commanded by General Torrejon. Without setting any guards or taking any precautions to stay alert of the enemy, the Americans had been taken completely by surprise by thousands Mexican troops already encamped in the area. 16 of the dragoons were killed and the rest taken by Torrejon's force, including Captain Thornton and his officers.

During the Battle of Alamo the Mexican army massacred almost all of the Texan garrison

News of the Thornton Affair, as it would later become known, reached Washington in May and gave President Polk his casus belli. He stood before Congress on 11 May and declared Mexico had "invaded our territory and shed American blood upon American soil. She has proclaimed that hostilities have commenced, and that the two nations are now at war". There was no question of whether Congress would vote for the war, which was officially declared on 13 May.

From the fires of revolution, both Mexico and the United States had finally collided and the following conflict would decide the shape of the continent for future generations. The Manifest Destiny, the self fulfilling prophecy of the USA's dominance in North America, was to be fought for on the battlefields of Palo Alto, Tabasco and many others. Soon Mexico City itself fell to the American forces and the Mexican government was bitterly forced to concede defeat.

A small band of Texans took the Mexican army by surprise during the Battle of San Jacinto in an 18-minute battle

The first official state flag of the state of California. It was first raised in the 1846 revolt

1845 – POLK ELECTED PRESIDENT
4 March
After winning the presidency on a ticket promising further expansion into the west, James Polk takes office amid heightened tensions between the US, Mexico and Great Britain.

1845 – U.S.A. ANNEXES TEXAS
29 December
After negotiations between the Republic of Texas and the USA, the bill to incorporate Texas as a US State is passed by Congress. Texas becomes a state by the end of the year.

1845 – DE HERRERA DEPOSED
December
After Polk sends an agent with an offer to buy the territories of California and New Mexico for $20m, President José Joaquín de Herrera is deposed for even considering the possibility.

1846 – THORNTON AFFAIR
25 April
With General Zachary Taylor encamped north of the Rio Grande river, a small contingent of dragoons under Captain Seth Thornton is attacked and captured by a superior Mexican force.

1846 – WAR DECLARED
13 May
After receiving news of the Thornton Affair, President Polk addresses congress and presents his case for war with Mexico. The vote passes with a large majority and war is declared.

ICON OF WAR AK-47

One of the most-recognisable weapons in the world continues to be at the centre of many global conflicts

ACTION COVER
This pressed steel cover is essential for keeping the gun's internal mechanisms clean. It's this aspect that has made the gun so successful in all environments.

BOLT
The gun's bolt has a very basic but effective design, with a thinner end that slots into the carrier. The head at the other end is designed to pull the expelled cartridge from the chamber

BOLT CARRIER AND PISTON
This houses the bolt and mainspring, while also being fixed to the piston, which fits into the gas cylinder.

MAINSPRING
Fitting within the rear of the bolt carrier, this can be removed by pushing its ribbed lug, which also serves to remove the action cover.

TRIGGER

KALASHNIKOV ASSAULT RIFLE

The secret to the AK-47's popularity all over the world is its simplicity and sheer endurance. Not only is it easy to use, and therefore deadly even in the hands of a novice, it can also be taken apart in under a minute. This makes cleaning and maintaining the gun much simpler than other more-complex weapons, but the AK-47 is notorious for its reliability even when in poor condition. As it's made up of only a small number of basic parts, the original Kalashnikov has been replicated repeatedly and its estimated that nearly 100 million have been produced since its first inception.

DETAILS

DATE 1949
ORIGIN USSR
BARREL 41.4cm (16.2 inches)
CALIBRE 7.62 x 39mm
RATE OF FIRE:
600 rounds per minute
FIRING MODES
Automatic / semi-automatic

BAYONETS

AK-47s were originally designed without a designated lug to attach a bayonet to. When it was decided that bayonets would be essential for the gun, they were developed to fix to the barrel without the aid of a lug, slotting easily into place. Subsequent designs of the blade attachments improved on their utility, with the scabbards even being applicable as wire-cutters. Some variants feature plastic bodies, while others were altered to be easier used separate from the rifle, as hand held weapons.

OTHER VARIANTS

Though a Soviet classic, local variants of the AK-47 were manufactured across the Communist bloc, from Albania to Vietnam. As testament to its simple mechanism and ease of use, many other nations used the AK-47 as a design base – often illicitly – making the Israeli Galil, Finnish RK 62/76 and Indian INSAS, amongst many others, honorary members of the Kalashnikov family.

Alamy

GAS CYLINDER

When the gun fires, exploding gases push the piston and bolt back onto the mainspring. Some excess gas will vent through the gas port on the barrel and back into the cylinder

GRENADE ATTACHMENT

40mm grenade launchers such as the Russian GP-25s and Po sh Pallads (pictured) can be fitted as standard to most AK-47 and AKM variants. These Under Barrel Grenade Launchers (UBGLs) have an effective range of around 400 metres and a rate of fire of around eight rounds per minute.

REAR SIGHT AND RANGE-FINDER

FORE SIGHT

BAYONET LUG

CLEANING ROD

EJECTION PORT

Remaining closed while the gun fires, as the bolt moves backwards this opens to expel the empty bullet cartridge.

FOLDING STOCK

Much like the German MP 40, certain models such as the AKS, AKMS and the Type 56 feature an underfolding stock. This makes the gun much easier to handle in tight spaces, such as from within a vehicle, and also makes it simpler to transport. Variants of the AK-47 with folding stocks are favoured by paratroopers and marines all over the world for their flexibility

The rear sight of the weapon is a simple iron notched tangent, which can be adjusted from 100 to 800 metres

MAGAZINE

With a stunted and recognisably curved shape, the magazine contains 30 stacked rounds and is released with a simple steel release catch in front of the trigger guard.

UNDERFOLDING STOCK

BHANBHAGTA GURUNG

World War II: In the darkest days of the Burma Campaign, one Gurkha took on the Japanese

WORDS STEVE WRIGHT

The Victoria Cross isn't handed out lightly – it's an honour ascribed only to those who have demonstrated the utmost bravery and valour in combat, truly going above and beyond in the process of defending the lives of their comrades, usually irrespective of their own safety. Bhanbhagta Gurung is one such individual.

Born in the village of Phalbu, Nepal, in September 1921, little documented information on Gurung's early life is available. His name first appears in records in 1939 at the outbreak of World War II. At this time, like many others, he decided to join in the fight. He linked up with the British Indian Army at the tender age of 18, joining the 3rd Battalion of the 2nd King Edward VII's Own Gurkha Rifles – alternately known as the Sirmoor Rifles.

The Gurkhas were renowned for being an effective and feared fighting force. They had been fighting for the British Empire since 1815, agreeing to do so as part of a peace accord after the British East India Company attempted to invade Nepal. Combining strict discipline with ruthless efficiency and formidable fighting ability – characterised by the lethal-looking kukri knife that was the hallmark of a Gurkha – over 200,000 of these soldiers fought on the side of the Allied forces during WWII. Their contribution, as it turned out, would prove to be vital.

Gurung's war would be fought in the Burma Campaign, in which Allied forces, comprising a mixture of British, Chinese and Commonwealth, took on a Japanese-backed Axis of Thai, Indian and Burmese troops. The British were expelled from Burma by the Japanese in 1942, but they were eager to get it back.

One of the earliest recorded examples of Gurung's first forays into combat was as part of an expedition into northern Burma in 1943, as a member of the newly formed Chindits. The brainchild of Major General Orde Charles Wingate – who also led the expedition – the Chindits were formed as part of an attempt at exploring new methods of guerrilla warfare, with their purpose being to conduct missions from deep behind enemy lines.

Having been promoted to the rank of Lance Naik (Lance Corporal), Gurung was assigned to the Number Four column along the Chindwin River, although his role in the campaign wasn't a long lasting one. After suffering heavy losses due to an ambush by Japanese forces, Gurung's column was ordered to disperse, with his battalion being withdrawn soon after. The losses they suffered were a bad omen, but Gurung may be considered fortunate that he was withdrawn so early, as the Chindits' role in the campaign would prove to be contentious. Serving behind enemy lines was obviously dangerous, and with much of the terrain being especially hazardous, injury and illness became rife among the men. This resulted in a high casualty rate, and the Chindits were disbanded in February 1945.

Several months after his withdrawal, Gurung was redeployed in the Arakan state (now known as Rakhine) as part of the 25th Indian Division. Their mission took them deep down the Mayu Range as part of a plan to capture the strategically important port and airfield of Akyab. Although the Allied forces experienced heavy losses, the Japanese occupiers were eventually defeated.

However, Gurung's military career was soon to reach a low point. Having since been promoted to the rank of Naik (Corporal), while on a mission Gurung was ordered to secure a hill. While Gurung took the hill as ordered, as it turned out, he had been sent to the wrong one. This caused his battalion commander to demote him, despite his insistences he had been holding the hill he was ordered to. It later transpired that his platoon commander had actually given him the wrong target, making his punishment seem all the more unfair and severe. Whether or not it was this harsh treatment that would prompt the display of valour that followed is a matter of speculation.

FOR VALOUR

The Victoria Cross (VC) is the highest military honour awarded to citizens in the Commonwealth and previously the British Empire. It is awarded for valour in the face of the enemy and can be given to anyone under military command.

WHY DID HE WIN IT?

For showing outstanding bravery in almost single-handedly defeating a large amount of enemy soldiers while under heavy fire. In the process he saved the lives of many in his company.

WHERE WAS THE BATTLE?

Snowdon East near Tamandu, Burma

WHEN WAS HE AWARDED THE VICTORIA CROSS?

16 October 1945

WHAT WAS THE POPULAR REACTION?

Gurung's exploits were reported on favourably in the British press, with an account of his ultimately VC-winning actions during the Burma Campaign being printed in the *London Gazette*.

Praise for a hero

"...a smiling, hard-swearing and indomitable soldier who in a battalion of brave men was one of the bravest"

Bhanbhagta Gurung was just one of 200,000 Nepalese volunteers to serve the British Empire as a Gurkha.

Praise for a hero

"His courageous clearing of five enemy positions single-handed was in itself decisive in capturing the objective and his inspiring example to the rest of the Company contributed to the speedy consolidation of this success"

Official citation for Gurung's award of the Victoria Cross

One thing is for sure: Gurung's competence had been questioned, and it was up to him to answer it.

As it turned out, it wasn't long before he got the chance to prove himself all over again. With the Burma Campaign still in motion, a major offensive was planned against the city of Mandalay in February 1945. In order to draw Japanese attention away from this assault, the 25th Division was ordered to land at Ruywa on the coast of Burma, before advancing toward the Irrawaddy River, with Gurung's 2nd Gurkha Rifles regiment being part of the assault.

Initially, things didn't go to plan. Resistance proved to be heavy, with the Japanese 54th Division occupying numerous areas of high ground. While the Gurkhas initially occupied two hilly areas – known as Snowdon and Snowdon East – this proved to be short lived, as a night attack by the Japanese forces drove the Allied forces out. Around half the company was lost, with the rest resorting to cutting their way out with their kukri knives after their ammunition was exhausted. When the dust had settled, Gurung's B Company was given a mission: retake Snowdon East.

The mission began on 5 March. With artillery fire having halted, for fear of hitting allies, Gurung and his group of around ten were on their own. Quickly getting pinned down by enemy fire, a well-concealed sniper in a nearby tree added to their woes, preventing them from progressing further. Unable to accurately pinpoint the shooter from his position, Gurung simply stood up – while still under heavy fire – calmly picked out the enemy and shot him. They began their march again.

Around 18 metres (60 feet) short of their objective, the group ran into trouble again in the form of heavy fire from various foxholes. Again taking matters into his own hands, Gurung charged out by himself, lobbing two grenades into a nearby foxhole that found their targets, before dispatching the occupant of a nearby groove with his bayonet.

After clearing two more foxholes in a similar fashion, Gurung had run out of all of his ammunition save for some smoke grenades – needless to say, they got put to effective use. Pitching the grenades into the foxholes, he set upon them with his kukri knife when they stumbled out. One Japanese soldier was still firing away with his machine gun, but by this point one of Gurung's comrades, Lal Singh Thapa, had caught up. Displaying a similar level of bravery to his fellow Gurkha, Thapa yanked the red-hot gun out of the enemy combatant's hands, leaving Gurung free to take his life. However, the battle wasn't over. After fortifying their location, Gurung and his men successfully fended off a Japanese counter-attack, securing the location in the process.

Despite earning near universal renown for his exploits in battle, Gurung chose to live out the rest of his days in relative obscurity, returning as a soldier at the end of his service in 1946 to return to his wife and raise a family. He died on 1 March 2008 at the age of 86. When people talk about the bravery of the Gurkhas, it's people like Bhanbhagta Gurung who they are referring to.

01 Engaging the enemy sniper. With the company pinned down by enemy sniper fire and suffering casualties, Gurung stands up while under fire and calmly picks off the enemy combatant, enabling his fellow soldiers to advance and preventing further bloodshed in the process.

02 Taking matters into his own hands. After encountering a number of enemy foxholes, the company is pinned down again. Almost without hesitation, Gurung runs to the first foxhole and kills its two occupants with grenades, before moving to the next one and dispatching the enemy combatant with his bayonet.

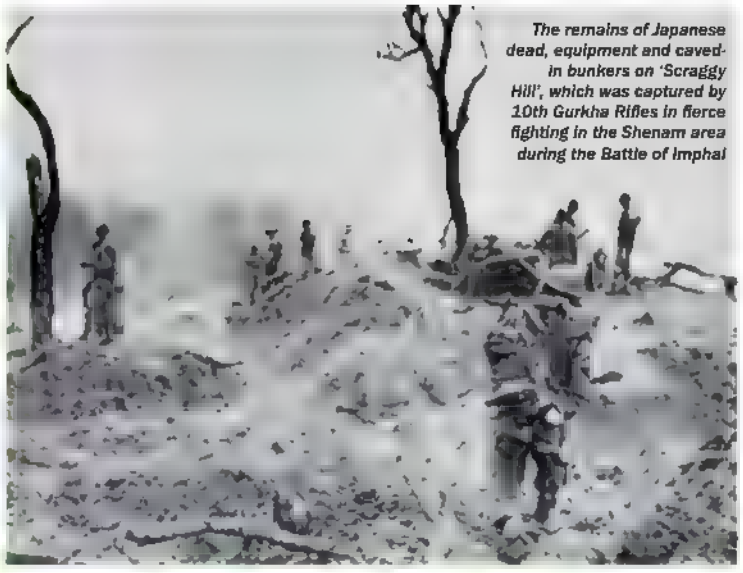
04 Dealing with the last one. Focusing on the final enemy refuge, Gurung jumps on top of the bunker and throws in two smoke grenades, killing its occupants with his kukri knife when they emerge. He then proceeds to enter the bunker and dispatch the remaining occupant in the same fashion.

THE GURKHA MUSEUM

To discover more about Bhanbhagta Gurung and the other fighting men of Britain's Gurkha regiments, from the 19th Century to the present day, visit The Gurkha Museum at Peninsula Barracks, Romsey Road, Winchester, SO23 8TS.

The museum is open Monday to Saturday, 10am to 5pm and entry is £3.50 for adults, £2 for seniors and free for children.

Visit www.thegurkhamuseum.co.uk or call 01962 842 832 for more information.



The remains of Japanese dead, equipment and caved-in bunkers on 'Scraggy Hill', which was captured by 10th Gurkha Rifles in fierce fighting in the Shenam area during the Battle of Imphal

03 Pressing the offensive. Not letting up, Gurung continues with his assault. Shortly after, he clears two more foxholes in a similar fashion via the use of grenades and bayonets, all the while under near-constant fire from a nearby bunker.

05 Holding the line. With the enemy in the immediate vicinity disposed of, but more on the way, Gurung orders three comrades to assist him in defending their position – inflicting heavy casualties on the enemy forces in the process.

ICON OF WAR
CUIRASSIER ARMOUR

As the growing use of firearms changed the shape of European warfare, cavalry needed to adapt their armour accordingly

HEAVY CAVALRY

Emerging during the early 17th Century, this armour was developed in response to the increased use of firearms on battlefields. Much more flexible than earlier medieval suits of armour, the cuirassier's armour plate was thicker and several layers were combined to provide extra protection. When a suit of this armour was completed, it would be shot at with a musket to test its effectiveness at stopping projectiles. These 'proving marks' were evidence that the armour would do its job on the battlefield.

HELMET

The plate crowning the forehead horizontally was intended to stop the downward swing of a blade, which otherwise might have dealt a fatal blow. These kinds of fully enclosed helms, known as a close helmets, became less popular in time, as they were deemed too impractical.

THREE-QUARTER LENGTH

Greater emphasis was placed on protecting the torso and upper legs of the cavalryman. This meant the armour was constructed and shaped with a mind to the wearer constantly being sat in a saddle. Cuirassier-style half-suits were also developed for infantrymen, but didn't feature such extended leg protection.

DETAILS

YEAR c. 1600
WEIGHT 30-40kg
MATERIAL Steel, leather, mail.
ORIGIN Europe (Savoyard style)

TORSO PROTECTION

Cuirassiers derived their name from the cuirass, or breastplate. By the end of the 18th and into the 19th Century cuirassiers wore only the cuirass and helmet, protecting the most-vital areas of the body.

SABRE STRIKE

Without the extra weight of limb extensions to their armour, cuirassiers could more-easily swing their sabres down on the enemy. By the 19th Century the sword had become the cuirassier's primary weapon over the lance or pistol, which were still used, but less often.

CEREMONIAL

A far cry from their brutally functional 17th Century origins, cuirassier helms eventually took on more fashionable and flamboyant designs. The units truly came into their own during the Napoleonic Wars, where each country's mounted units were instantly recognisable from their unique appearance.

Cuirassier armour can still be seen worn in the ceremonial and parade uniforms of many mounted units, such as the UK's Household Cavalry

© INTERFOTO / Alamy

A QUESTION OF IDENTITY
A 2013 poll asked the population of Crimea which nationality they identified with most. The results reflect the historic ties between the region and Russia.

Police detain a protester demonstrating against the Russian military actions in Crimea, 2 March 2014. Interim Ukrainian president Oleksandr Turchynov placed his military on high alert in response to Russia's possible military intervention

© epa european pressphoto agency b.v. / Alamy

BRIEFING

The Crimean Crisis

An historic struggle for power, control and identity in one peninsula

Crimea is sought after by both Russia and Ukraine. But why has there been so much conflict over this small region? To find out, you have to look back through the centuries

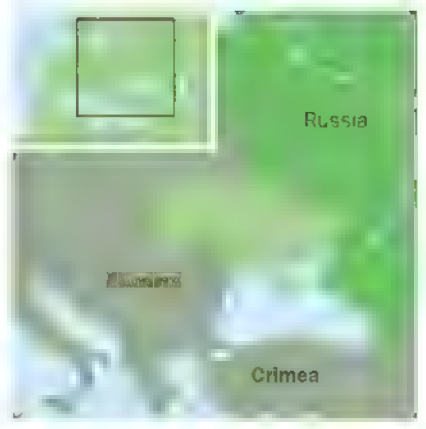
WORDS JACK GRIFFITHS

The date is 24 November 2013 and over 100,000 Ukrainians have begun a demonstration in the capital Kiev against the government. It's the biggest protest since the 2004 2005 Orange Revolution. The anti-establishment rally was initiated by then-president Viktor Yanukovych signing a political and trade agreement with Russia instead of the EU. After much deliberation, Yanukovych was forcibly removed from his post in February 2014. This Ukrainian Revolution wasn't taken too kindly by Vladimir Putin and the Kremlin who believed that a more Western sed Ukraine would result in country joining NATO and withdrawing the plentiful natural gas supply

What followed was the mobilisation of Russian troops on the eastern border of Ukraine. Despite the EU and US urging against action, this threat wasn't a bluff. Soon an outbreak of violence and civil unrest, both pro- and anti-Russian, arose in the eastern Ukrainian states, especially the regions of Donetsk and Luhansk.

Seizing the initiative, President Putin signed a bill on the 18 March to assimilate Crimea into Russia, beginning what became known as the Crimean Crisis. Making up 26,100 square kilometres (16,218 square miles) and 4.3 per cent of Ukraine's total territory, the peninsula has always been an area of Russian interest. In fact, nearly 60 per cent of its population of 2 million identify themselves as Russian and it has by far the highest concentration of Russian speakers in Ukraine. As well as the cultural connections, the Crimean harbour city of Sevastopol houses the Russian Black Sea fleet, containing hundreds of ships.

The area itself is quintessentially Russian. There isn't a single Ukrainian Language school to be found, while Ukrainian television and radio are limited to 10 and 20 minutes per week respectively. The 2013 Euromaidan demonstrations in Kiev for closer European integration reopened the questions of identity in Crimea. When the last gun of the Crimean War had been fired in 1856, the region would have an almost constant changing of leadership up until the recent crisis. From Stalin's brutal purges, to the massacre of the White Army, here we trace this region's turbulent story and uncover the roots of its current crisis



THE RUSSO-TURKISH WARS

THE ROLE OF CRIMEA IN THE TWO POWERS' SEEMINGLY NEVER-ENDING CONFLICTS

WAR OF 1710-11

This conflict was one of the few Ottoman victories in the series of wars between the two kingdoms. Crimea was at this time known as the Crimean Khanate and was a tributary of the Ottoman Empire. Crimean lands in this period spread out into mainland Ukraine, wedged in between the vast empires of Poland and Russia. It stayed this way after the Ottoman victory.

WAR OF 1735-39

Russia had always desired to have a warm-water port in the Black Sea, so in this conflict that goal was pursued further. The war was provoked by constant raids from Crimean Tatars into Russia and resulted in the Treaty of Niš, which forced the Tatars to give up their claim on Crimea.

WAR OF 1768-74

It was in this war that the Russia finally succeeded in bringing Crimea under its influence. It was officially annexed in 1783, as the whole Crimean Khanate became Russian.

LATER WARS

Three more wars raged between the two powers, and Russia recorded unanimous victories on every occasion. The Ottoman Empire was now the 'Sick Man of Europe' and its attempts at regaining its lost lands were almost futile. Russian expansion and its newfound confidence resulted in the flames being fanned for the impending Crimean War.

The Crimean War 1853-1856

Remembered in Britain for the famous charge of the Light Brigade and Florence Nightingale, the Crimean, or Eastern, War is referred to quite differently in the region that gave the conflict its name.

Fought primarily on the peninsula and the Black Sea, the war was instigated by religious unrest in the Middle East. It was also motivated by imperial Russia's desire to have ownership of a warm-water dock in Ottoman lands. Crimea at this time was still part of Russia due to the Tsar's empire annexing it a decade after defeating Ottoman forces in the 1774 Battle of Kozludzha. However, its future would be decided by a clash with other empires.

Opposing Russia were Britain, France and the Ottoman Empire, who just decades previous had been embroiled in the bloody Napoleonic Wars. What followed was a devastating loss for Russia, which suffered up to 1 million casualties, mainly from disease and neglect. From here on out Russia would be forced to modernise to keep up to speed with the major European powers.

The 1854 Battle of Alma, for example, was fought on Crimean soil and saw the French and British forces using advanced musket technology that the Russian military simply did not possess. This battle was fought at the important Russian naval base of Sevastopol, which is still one of the main cities in the region today. Built in 1783, the city was a major area of Russian influence in Crimea and was besieged during the war.

In the decades following its defeat, Russia became engaged in another conflict with the Ottoman Empire. The Russia-Turkish War of 1877-78 was the final series of hostilities between the two empires and saw Ukraine and Crimea ally themselves with their larger neighbour. This alliance wasn't popular with many in Ukraine, however, and it was in this period that the notion of Ukrainian national identity first arose. Major figures in this period were poet Taras Shevchenko and latterly social activist Mykola Mikhnovsky who galvanised the idea of Ukrainian nationalism. Serfdom was abolished in 1861, enabling the peasant population more rights and freedom.

EVENTS THAT LED TO THE CRIMEAN CRISIS

1787-1791
Second Russian-Turkish War. Turkey recognises the annexation of Crimea by Russia.

1853-1856
The Crimean War was fought primarily on the peninsula and was motivated by constant religious tension between the Russian and Ottoman Empires.

1917
Crimea briefly became a sovereign state before becoming a base for the White Army during the Russian Revolution.

The siege of Sevastopol was a brutal battle that scarred Crimea both physically and politically

Valentin Ramirez

What followed was a drive by both the intelligentsia and the working populace to increase the role of local people in economics and politics and a network of cultural education. The Russians attempted to counter this movement by introducing 'Ems Ukaz', which banned the distribution of all works in the Ukrainian language. This movement debatably hasn't waned in Crimea, but in the rest of the country 'Ukrainisation' arose and continued into the 20th Century. The Crimean War can undoubtedly be seen as the point when Ukrainian nationalism first surfaced, but also when Crimea itself began to become distant from the rest of Ukraine.

Early 20th-Century Crimea

The beginning of the 20th Century saw no respite for the unrest in Crimea as control of the peninsula changed hands on numerous occasions. The Tatars, a Turkic population that had settled in Crimea in the 15th Century, grew in prominence around this time.

Prior to the First World War, there was major tension between the Tatars and the Slavic populations who also inhabited the area. This came to a head during The Great War, as the Tatars saw their opportunity to create a Crimean Tatar state in the wake of the Russian army's constant retreat from the oncoming German forces. Their chance was lost with the Russian Revolution in 1917, when fierce fighting brought the Bolshevik Red Army and Anti-Communist White Movement into Crimea.

> **"The scene was set for a peaceful Crimea, but yet another twist in the tale was just around the corner"**

Crimea was the last outpost of the White Army and their general, Anton Denikin, believed they could turn it into a haven of anti-Communism, in the same way Taiwan is today with mainland China. After briefly becoming a sovereign state in the same year, the Bolshevik victory turned the area into the Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic under the new umbrella of the USSR.

Under the Soviet Union, the Tatars were encouraged to make Crimea their homeland, as they were preferred to the wealthy Tsarist Pomeshchiki landowners. A former holiday resort for the upper class in Imperial Russia, Lenin's revolution gave the Tatars much more room to manoeuvre in their 'sacred homeland'

'Korenisation' was the buzzword for the Soviet Union in the inter-war period. The new Communist hierarchy recognised the need to pay attention to the less-affluent areas of the Russian Federation. Making areas such as Crimea more prosperous would help the spread of left-wing ideology and strengthen the USSR. Tatar national development was endorsed by the Kremlin, as all education in the Tatar areas of Crimea was taught in their own language. The scene was set for a peaceful Crimea, but

1918-1921
Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic is formed within the Russian Federation.

October 1920
The White Army, led by General Anton Denikin, is driven from Crimea by Bolsheviks as the effects of the Russian Revolution continue to be felt.

1921
The peninsula, then populated mainly by Muslim Tatars, becomes part of the Soviet Union.

1921
A combination of drought, crop failure and huge Russian taxes cause a famine throughout Crimea and Ukraine.

1924
Soviet takeover and beginning of Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic.

1927
Moscow orders 400,000 Jews to make Crimea their natural homeland. This causes ethnic tensions with the Tatars.

The Russian Black Sea Fleet after the battle of Synope in 1853

Nikolay Krassovsky

yet another a twist in the tale was just around the corner.

Soviet Crimea

It goes without saying that the ascension of Josef Stalin to power changed the entire Soviet Union drastically, including the Crimean peninsula. The beginnings of this change came in 1927 when Moscow ordered the movement of 400,000 Jews to unoccupied land in Crimea. This movement upset the status quo of the region and it would be disrupted even more as the Nazi juggernaut rolled in.

20,000 Tatars were sent to the front against the Nazis as Sevastopol was nearly destroyed in the conflict. Crimea was under occupation by the Third Reich for two years during the war and during this period some Tatars even sided with the Germans, collaborating with covert missions. After the Nazi retreat (the war halved the population of Crimea), this fact wasn't lost on the Soviet Union. It used the NKVD secret police to round up around 300,000 Tatars, Greeks, Armenians and other minorities for deportation by cattle truck to Central Asia. This mass movement also included 30 to 40,000 of the Tatar intelligentsia banished to Siberia. This was partly due to their assistance to the Germans but, as they served the USSR in equal or even greater numbers, it was evidently a part of Stalin's 'collectivisation'.

The region was now known as the Crimean Oblast and the Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR) was dissolved. Now lacking the majority of the Tatar population, Soviet historiography ordered the change of old Tatar place names to Soviet ones, as they were effectively removed the from Crimean history. As the Cold War began to develop, another section of history was about to be written.

In February 1954, the new Russian premier, Nikita Khrushchev, transferred Crimea from the Russian Soviet Federation of Socialist Republics (RSFSR) to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic (UkrSSR). Little was known at the time why this decision was taken but it's believed that it was done by Khrushchev due to his Ukrainian roots and previous membership of the Ukrainian Communist Party. It was also the 300th anniversary of Treaty of Pereyaslav, which signalled the beginning of Russian activity in Ukraine.

The reason this decision was taken remains etched in mystery, especially when it's considered the treaty had nothing to do with Crimea and that 75 per cent of the peninsula's population in 1954 was ethnic Russian. This era would become one of trouble, with the beginning of de-Stalinisation causing a Ukrainian dissident movement that lasted throughout the 1960s and 70s.

"Khrushchev's actions still affect both nations and are partly responsible for the continued unresolved conflict"

1942-1944
Crimea is occupied by Nazi Germany as the Third Reich presses east to occupy Soviet lands. WWII would ruin Crimea's economy and almost halve its population.

17-18 May 1944
Tatar rounded up by NKVD secret police and sent to Central Asia on cattle trucks.

4-5 February 1945
Post-war Yalta Conference with 'The Big Three' Stalin, Churchill and Roosevelt.

1954
Nikita Khrushchev gives Crimea back to Ukraine, surprising both the elite and the mass population.

1960s
The death of Stalin signals the beginning of a dissident movement in Ukraine and a struggle for freedom.

1991
The Turkish Tatar people return to Crimea after the fall of the USSR but their numbers are very low after the Soviet regime.

Churchill, Franklin Roosevelt and Josef Stalin met [illegible] in February 1945 to discuss their joint occupation [illegible] war Europe

With Stalin gone, Ukraine, along with other nations in the USSR, seized its opportunity to rebel from Soviet oppression. This period signalled the rebirth of a Ukrainian national identity, which would have a big affect on Crimea. It would seem, considering the events in 2014, Khrushchev's actions still affect both nations and are partly responsible for the continued unresolved conflict.

Post-USSR Crimea

With the breakup of the USSR, many expected the first president of the Russian Federation, Boris Yeltsin, to return Crimea to Russia. Instead, the Soviet collapse enabled the Tatars to return to Crimea. A Ukrainian referendum suggested that only 54 per cent of Crimean voters favoured independence from Russia this was the lowest majority of all Ukraine's regions. Another poll at the time showed that an overwhelming 93 per cent wanted full Crimean autonomy, so accordingly the Autonomous Republic of Crimea was restored Crimea now had significant independence, with its own legislature and constitution.

In 1993 it was decided that elections should be held for a new system of Crimean government – a presidential system. The resulting victor was former KGB border guard Yuriy Meshkov, a member of the Republican Party of Crimea, who desired a much closer relationship with Russia, devising the idea of a military-political union. He even advocated the use of the Russian Ruble as the primary currency of the state.

After intense pressure from both Kiev and his own parliament, who opposed his vehemently pro-Russian stance, Meshkov was ousted from power on 17 March 1995. Statistics suggest that his policies were only supported by 27 per cent of the Crimean population – it seems he wasn't popular with the masses either. Self-government was annulled by 19 May and Crimea was absorbed back into Kiev's sphere of influence.

By 1997 a treaty was drawn up by both countries that allowed Russia to keep its Black Sea Fleet in Sevastopol. Today, in the wake of the recent events surrounding the Crimean Crisis, the agreement has been extended – the fleet is set to remain there until 2042. Meanwhile, by 2001 the Tatar population of the region had increased to approximately 12 per cent as they returned to the post-USSR region.

Study on the Crimean Crisis has suggested recent events could have been averted if the warnings in 2004 had been heeded. In that year, many were concerned that the Russia-friendly regions in the east of Ukraine would protest if Viktor Yanukovych became president. However, he ended up losing out to Viktor Yushchenko in an election that instigated the 2004 Orange Revolution. The two-month demonstration was an attempt to ensure the pro-Western Yushchenko was brought to power, as the run-up to the election was riddled with allegations of fraud and corruption. Many believed that the election was purposefully rigged in the favour of the Russian sympathising Yanukovych. This successful and bloodless 'revolution' was a precursor to the recent events in the country, as Yanukovych was elected fairly in 2010. This episode would set the wheels in motion for what would lead up to the Crimean Crisis of 2014.

1991
The Crimean Autonomous Republic is restored and is now part of the newly independent Ukraine.

1993
It is decided that elections should be held for the first president of Crimea, leading an autonomous government.

16 Feb 1994-17 march 1995
Yuriy Meshkov serves as president of Crimea. Only person to hold the position.

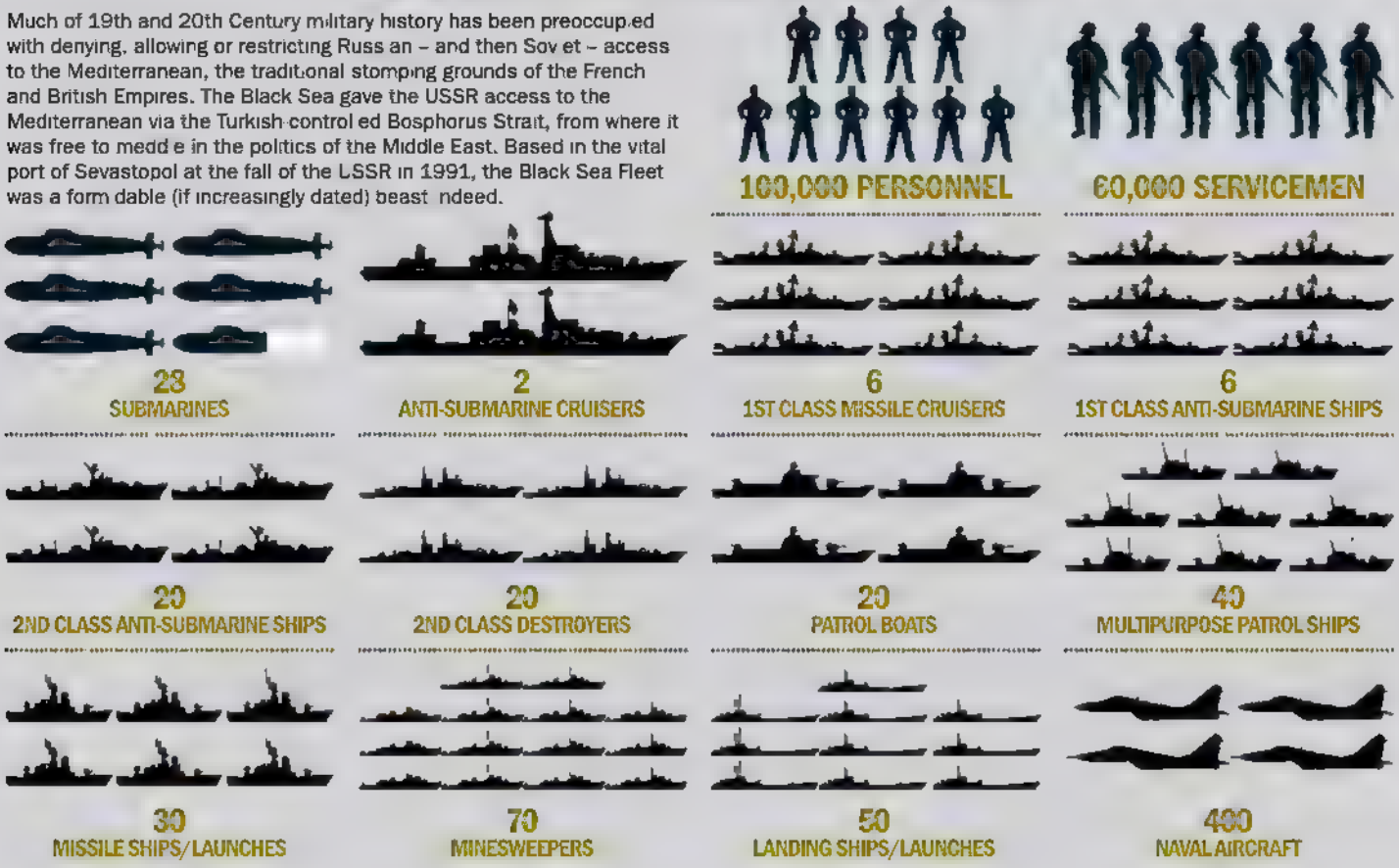
1997
Ukraine and Russia sign a treaty that allow Russia to keep its fleet in Sevastopol. This has since been extended, so the fleet is set to remain there until 2042.

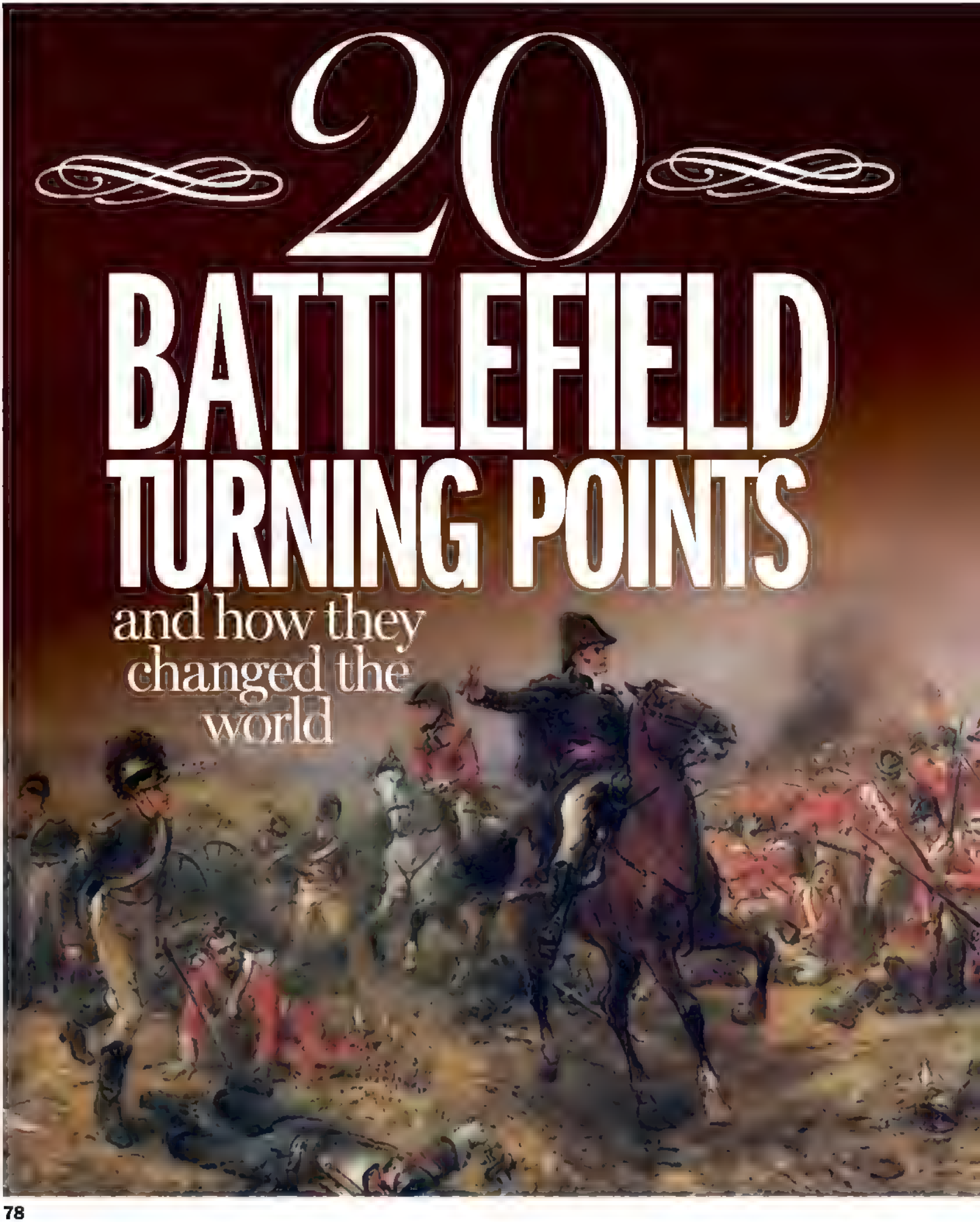
2004-2005
The Orange Revolution lasts for two months as protestors in Kiev demand that Viktor Yushchenko be put in power.

2014
The recent Crimea Crisis begins as armed Russian troops enter the peninsula against the wishes of the United Nations.

THE BLACK SEA FLEET AT THE FALL OF THE USSR

Much of 19th and 20th Century military history has been preoccupied with denying, allowing or restricting Russian – and then Soviet – access to the Mediterranean, the traditional stomping grounds of the French and British Empires. The Black Sea gave the USSR access to the Mediterranean via the Turkish-controlled Bosphorus Strait, from where it was free to meddle in the politics of the Middle East. Based in the vital port of Sevastopol at the fall of the USSR in 1991, the Black Sea Fleet was a formidable (if increasingly dated) beast indeed.





20 BATTLEFIELD TURNING POINTS

and how they changed the world

We cast a critical eye over the pivotal moments that decided whether a battle was won or lost, and what these crucial decisions meant for the world beyond the battlefield.

WORDS: ANDY BROWN

Napoleon and his marshals made mistakes at Waterloo, but that shouldn't distract from the brilliant battle that Wellington fought

NAPOLEON'S TYRANNY IS QUASHED

BATTLE Waterloo
DATE 18 June 1815
COMBATANTS France vs Great Britain and Prussia

As the smoke from the cannons gradually cleared over the boggy fields of Waterloo, the fate of Europe had been decided and the man that some claim to be the greatest military genius the world had ever seen had been soundly beaten. There would be no comeback from *this* defeat, but for a long time the battle hung in the balance, and afterwards the Duke of Wellington remarked that is was the "nearest run thing you ever saw in your life, by God."

The Duke of Wellington only agreed to face Napoleon at Waterloo when the Prussian General Blucher agreed to send support. Without his ally, Wellington would have instead retreated to Brussels. There were several key clashes in the lead up to Waterloo. At the Battle of Ligny on 16 June the French army defeated the Prussians but allowed them to retreat in good order – leaving the Prussians a relatively effective fighting force. The French emperor had split his army up into different units and one of these, commanded by Marshal Ney, had orders to take the crossroads at Quatre Bras, from where they could harass the rear of the Prussian army. Ney had been defeated by Wellington in battle before, and was overly cautious and failed in his objectives.

Ney wasn't the only French marshal to not carry out his order effectively though – Marshal Grouchy had been given 33,000 men and was tasked with preventing the Prussians from making contact with Wellington, something that he failed to do. Napoleon's plan to defeat the Prussians while a smaller force kept the British at bay hadn't worked, but on the morning of Waterloo he was still supremely confident; the 'little corporal' didn't believe the Prussians would be able to join up with the British and didn't rate Wellington as a general. The battle began with a French attack at Hougoumont and, while the fighting was initially low key, it soon escalated with Napoleon's grand battery of 80 cannons beginning to sing and opening up dangerous gaps in Wellington's cavalry.

With the British troops weakened by cannon fire, Napoleon began his attack in earnest and advanced numerous infantry corps. The French troops began to push Wellington's men back and it looked as though the Duke would soon be added to the long line of Napoleon's triumphs when he was informed that Prussian troops were nearing. The French commander sent a message to Grouchy to attack the arriving Prussians but he was too far away.

The turning point

The British, seeing that their infantry were in danger, charged at their enemy, halting their progress but leaving themselves exposed. Hours of intense fighting followed, with the scales once more tipping towards the British when General Blucher's Prussian force arrived at the battle at around 4.30pm. It was the Prussian army that attacked Napoleon's right flank and caused chaos, giving Wellington the upper hand and, with his forces losing discipline and ground, Napoleon ordered a retreat. Wellington's leadership, some uncharacteristic mistakes by Napoleon and the boggy ground of the battlefield all played key roles, but the battle had really been decided the second the French allowed the Prussian reinforcements to escape unscathed

Consequences

Following the battle the French monarchy was restored, with King Louis XVIII retaking the throne on 8 July 1815, while Napoleon was banished to Saint Helena. The whole balance of power in Europe had changed, with Britain pre-eminent in the new order

Wellington and the Prussian General Blucher agreed before the battle that their armies would support each other to defeat Wellington

A painting of Napoleon on his imperial throne – the Corsican rose from humble beginnings to become one of the world's most powerful figures

"Hours of intense fighting followed, with the scales tipping towards the British"

THE ROMAN EMPIRE CHEATS DEATH

BATTLE Metaurus
DATE 207 BCE
COMBATANTS Rome vs Carthage

Hannibal Barca first tasted battle when he was aged just nine years old and was a general by 26. For the military leader hatred of Rome was in his blood - Carthage was a great power but had suffered in the First Punic War and had been driven out of western Sicily by the Romans. The Second Punic War, with the Carthaginian troops under Hannibal's command, was very much unfinished business, and the fight had been taken to Rome's doorstep, with Hannibal leading his men and mighty war elephants into Italy.

The battle was a family affair, with Hasdrubal Barca, Hannibal's brother, also leading an army in the conflict. Hasdrubal gathered a force that contained siege equipment that Hannibal needed to help him take Rome and fresh troops and made the same journey his brother had made into Italy. Carthage's hopes of a victory that would have shaken the ancient world to its very foundations relied on the two brothers being able to join forces. In response to this threat, Rome had mobilised two armies, one led by Gaius Claudius Nero and the other by Marcus Livius.

The turning point

Eager to join forces with his brother, Hasdrubal sent messengers to him to organise their rendezvous. These messengers were captured by the soldiers of Nero. Realising the importance of the information he had gained, Nero marched his men as quickly as he could to meet Marcus Livius, reaching the town of Sena at night time with Hasdrubal's forces barely half a mile away to the north. When daylight broke Hasdrubal saw the vastly increased Roman army facing him, quickly deduced what had happened and retreated from the field.

As the Carthaginian forces retired to a safer position where they could again try to contact Hannibal's forces, their guides betrayed them and left them lost on the banks of the river Metarus, desperately searching for a suitable crossing point. The younger Barca brother's forces spent the night searching in vain and, when morning came, his ragged troops were greeted with an advancing Roman army. With the water at their back they had no option but to face the Romans head on.

The Carthaginians were far outnumbered and their cavalry was quickly defeated. However, the battle really turned when Nero – leading the forces on the right of the Roman line – found his path blocked; instead he took some of his men to the left and crashed them into the right flank of the enemy. When this flank collapsed, disorder entered the Carthaginian ranks and their retreat was ragged, with many of their men being cut down as they fled. This battle once again reiterated that, in warfare, knowledge really is power and the interception of the message from Hasdrubal to his brother was the deciding factor in this epic ancient clash.

Consequences

Hasdrubal was killed at the battle and his head was severed from his body as a trophy. With the two brothers forced apart, Hannibal was effectively stranded in Italy without reinforcements – if this hadn't have occurred it is quite feasible that Rome could have fallen. Instead, the Roman Empire remained the ancient world's dominant force for centuries.

"If this hadn't have occurred it is quite feasible that Rome could have fallen"

The Roman army was well trained and disciplined

AMERICA TURNS LATIN

BATTLE Cajamarca
DATE 16 November 1532
COMBATANTS Inca Empire vs Spain

Fresh from victory in a recent civil war, the Inca emperor Atahualpa believed he had little to fear from the strange white men that arrived in his domain. The small Spanish force, led by Francisco Pizarro, may have had more advanced weaponry such as guns but they were hugely outnumbered.

Atahualpa, accompanied by only a small force, confidently met with Pizarro and his men, with his main force a small distance away. The majority of the Spanish conquistadors had hidden themselves in a nearby building though and opened fire on the Incas. When the larger forces invested gated what had happened to their emperor they were defeated by a mixture of superior technology and surprise; they had never seen horses before so were spectacularly ill equipped to deal with a cavalry charge which, when used with covering gunfire meant their super or numbers countered for nothing. The element of surprise and new technology led to a decisive victory for the Europeans.

Soon the continent's mightiest indigenous civilisation would dramatically fall – incorporated into the new Viceroy of Peru – and the whole continent would be broken open by the clawhammer of Spanish colonisation. At the beginning of the 16th Century, it was South America, but by the century's close it would be firmly Latin.

LOVE LEADS ROME TO EMPIRE

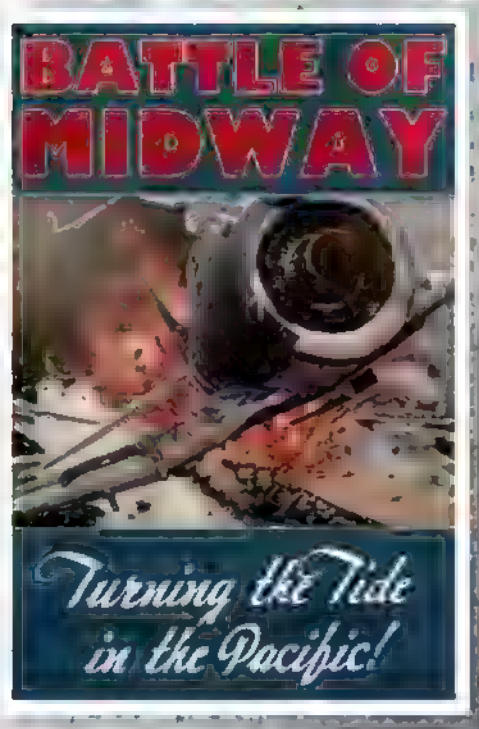
BATTLE Actium
DATE 2 September 31 BCE
COMBATANTS Mark Antony vs Octavian

On the Ionian Sea two forces clashed to decide the fate of the Rome. The armies were led by Mark Antony, Julius Caesar's old general, and Octavian, his adopted son, but it wasn't either of Caesar's heirs who decided the outcome, but the Egyptian Pharaoh Cleopatra. Figuring she had seen enough of the battle while its outcome still hung in the balance, she ordered her fleet to return to the open sea and Antony set off in pursuit, with around 40 of his ships accompanying him. The battle continued, but after so many of Antony's fleet had deserted, those that remained stood no chance and most of them were sunk or met a fiery end under a storm of flaming arrows. Antony may have been reunited with his mistress, but love had cost him victory. Support ebbs from Mark Anthony, and with it his vision of Roman civilisation. Under Octavian, Rome transitioned from Republic to Empire, spreading its reach across Europe, North Africa and Central Asia.

KINGS LOOK ON IN TERROR

BATTLE Valmy
DATE 20 September 1792
COMBATANTS France vs Prussia

During the series of wars that occurred following the bloody French Revolution, Prussian troops attempted to march on Paris and were faced by an unproven force mustered by the new French government. During the battle the French left wing advanced to higher ground and, from their vantage point, defeated the Prussians in the ensuring exchange of fire. This tactical manoeuvre helped seal victory, checking the interference of Central Europe's fearful monarchs and preserving the nascent revolution. A new France would endure and take its place on the world stage.



PERSIA FAILS TO LAND THE KILLER BLOW

BATTLE Marathon
DATE August 490 BCE
COMBATANTS Athens vs Persian Empire

In 490 BCE the greatest military force on earth arrived in Greece to conquer all that stood before them. The mighty Persian army, led by Darius I, numbered anywhere from 100,000 to 250,000 men and had defeated all the Greek forces they encountered before Marathon, where their fleet moored in a small bay. The Greek force, led by the Athenian general, Miltiades only numbered around 10,000. Their tactics were simple; hold off the huge invasion fleet for as long as they could and hope that help from the Spartan army arrived soon. Due to the discrepancy in the size of the forces the Persians could surely have added another crushing victory but instead Darius chose defeat through inaction; apparently unsure how to utilise his cavalry he chose not to attack for five whole days. The Greek forces eventually ended the stalemate and charged at the Persians, driving them backwards, and claimed victory. However, if Darius had chosen to attack, then victory – and perhaps all of Greece – would surely have been his.

Instead, the Greeks hold on to their independence – but only just. Fighting off successive invasion attempts, one northern kingdom – Macedon – emerges as a centre of resistance and Alexander the Great wipes the Persian Empire off the map.

THE AMBUSH THAT CHANGED THE SHAPE OF ASIA

BATTLE Hydaspes
DATE 326 BCE
COMBATANTS Macedon vs Paurava Kingdom

With the two forces on either side of the fast flowing and monsoon swollen Hydaspes river it seemed like Alexander the Great's conquest of India would come to an end. Despite his reputation for daring tactical moves, this battle was won through stealth; a small Greek force secretly crossed upriver via a small island to attack from the rear while his own forces managed to cross at a different point and smash into their enemy in a pincer movement. Though Alexander's empire crumbled upon his death, the anarchy left by Greek advance left a power vacuum that the Maurya Empire would fill – dominating the bulk of South Asia, as well as parts of Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan. They would create a web of trade that survived after them, linking the Middle East to South East Asia, the rapid spread of Buddhism to China, Japan, Korea, Vietnam, Tibet, Burma, Thailand, Laos and Cambodia, and the dream of a nearly united India that would take another 2,000 years to permanently realise.

AMERICA HOLDS ON IN THE PACIFIC

BATTLE Midway
DATE 4-7 June 1942
COMBATANTS Japan vs the United States

Six months after their surprise attack on Pearl Harbour, the Japanese navy intended to wipe out their American counterparts and ensure their dominance in the Pacific. This battle – which ended with such a crushing defeat for Japan that their navy was virtually rendered useless for the rest of the war – was ultimately decided by information.

The Japanese planned to ambush the American forces but from around the spring of that year the Americans had broken the Japanese codes. This meant that the Americans knew exactly what their enemy planned, their strength and their formation and as such were able to sink four carriers and one heavy cruiser as well as experienced men; Japan couldn't easily replace either the weaponry or the personnel. The ability of the American codebreakers to read their enemy's messages had been this battle's, and perhaps the war in the Pacific's, turning point.

Their defeat at Midway didn't immediately put Japan on the back foot – that would come a bit later – but in thwarting what could have easily been a second Pearl Harbour, the United States was able to seize the initiative. A gruelling invasion of the Japanese-held Solomon Islands would follow, rolling back the previously unstoppable expansion of Imperial Japan.

ONE DEATH REDEFINES A NATION

BATTLE Hastings
DATE 14 October 1066
COMBATANTS England vs Normandy

The year was 1066 and two armies were fighting each with a feverous intensity to decide the very future of England – the battle wasn't taking place in Hastings but Stamford Bridge in the north of England. Harold Godwinson's forces were battling Vikings led by King Harald Hardrada and, after a bloody fight, the Norwegian invaders were defeated and their leader killed. Godwinson's work wasn't done yet though; a French duke was claiming the crown was his and had an army to back it up. That Harold Godwinson didn't leave his army enough time to recover after the Battle of Stamford Bridge and marched them back down south to engage William was undoubtedly a pivotal moment in the battle, but even once the armies had begun to fight Harold should still have won.

The turning point

During the Battle of Hastings the Norman army attacked their enemy and then retreated several times – this 'feigned fight' was designed to draw their opponents from their advantageous position on the battlefield, atop Senlac Hill. The Anglo-Saxon troops failed to maintain discipline and pursued the retreating men down the hill, which ultimately left them exposed and outflanked. The battle then descended into a brutal melee with little discipline from either side, but the Norman troops gained the upper hand and as soon as the English king was killed on the battlefield the battle was effectively over. Harold had been undone by his troop's eagerness to fight their opponents rather than remaining patient. Fortune doesn't always favour the brave.

Consequences

William became the first Norman king of England on Christmas Day 1066. England's culture, language, politics and identity are redefined, creating the nation we know today.

The Bayeux Tapestry shows a scene from the battle

Following his victory, William was crowned king on 25 December 1066

The eagerness of King Harold's troops to engage in battle would be their undoing

THE TANK AGE ROARS INTO LIFE

BATTLE Cambrai
DATE 20 November – 7 December 1917
COMBATANTS British Empire and United States vs Germany

In the long and gruelling slog of trench warfare where battles lasted months there weren't often turning points, but the use of tanks at this battle was a decisive moment. Tanks had been used before in WWI but this was their first real success, and soon the terrifying roar of their engines would redefine the pace of conflict of the 20th Century.

THE ARROWS THAT SAVE THE CROWN

BATTLE Agincourt
DATE 25 October 1415
COMBATANTS England vs France

King Henry V of England was an experienced military leader. For the Battle of Agincourt, he assembled what might have been a small army, but one that was experienced and, for the time, highly disciplined. The most important of these troops were the English longbowmen, who could shoot around six arrows a minute – these arrows would wound at 400 yards and kill at 200. These troops may have been important to the English victory but what was decisive was Henry's leadership.

The turning point

The decisive moment in the battle was when Henry ordered his men to attack. Not only did this give them the initiative – something not to be underestimated – but gave his soldiers an early advantage as they could establish a new defensive position by hammering into the ground a series pointed stakes, forming a primitive fence. The French were massed together – some believe they thought that reinforcement were on the way and were waiting for this – and made easy targets for the deadly longbowmen. Once they had eventually regrouped and tried to advance their path was hampered by their dead and dying colleagues and their horses. Reduced to walking pace, they made an easy target for the archers that then joined the knights in attacking and defeating the French cavalry. The French second line was almost destroyed, and when a messenger from Henry told the waiting third line that if they joined the fight none of them would be spared, they soon left the field. The battle was over.

Consequences

Although France eventually wins the Hundred Years' War, victory at Agincourt profoundly alters the journey of the English crown. The French king's daughter Catherine of Valois is married to Henry V, producing an heir in Henry VI. Perhaps more crucially, her secret marriage to Owen Tudor gives the Tudor dynasty a claim to the English throne.

Henry V wasn't a leader to wait on the sides – he was a warrior king who would be in the thick of the action

"Victory at Agincourt profoundly alters the journey of the English crown"

The Battle of Agincourt was a major clash in the Hundred Years' War

ISLAM COMES TO THE MIDDLE EAST

BATTLE Yarmouk
DATE August 636
COMBATANTS Byzantine Empire vs Rashidun Caliphate

Both armies were deployed into four sections, with two units in the centre and one on each flank in this battle along the Yarmouk River, in what is today the border of Syria and Jordan. The turning point came when, after several days of fighting, Khalid executed a bold plan of action; he massed his cavalry force and drove the Byzantine cavalry entirely off the battlefield so that their infantry had no support. With the Greek Orthodox Byzantine Empire ejected from The Levant, Islam becomes the dominant force in the region and Jerusalem becomes the prize over which centuries of holy wars will be waged.

LATIN AMERICA FREED

Battle Boyaca
Date 7 August 1819
Combatants New Granada vs Spain

Battles can be won before a shot has even been fired, such as with this key clash in the wars for Latin American independence from the Spanish Empire. The rebel army, led by Simon Bolivar, planned to advance to the capital of Gran Granada (modern-day Colombia), Bogata, in a move that was anticipated by Colonel Jose Maria Barreiro, the commander of the Spanish forces. Barreiro planned to beat the rebel army to Tunja – a key strategic town – but Bolivar marched his army all night and used a little known shortcut to reach there first.

While at the town his forces enjoyed food, medicine and ammunition that was meant for their enemy. The location also meant that they could attack Barreiro's forces when they were vulnerable while crossing a river close to the town, and the eventual battle, which saw the rebel army suffer just 13 deaths, was quickly over. In truth it had been over from the moment that Bolivar reached Tunja first.

Although Boyaca ends with New Grenada throwing off the chains of the Spanish Empire, Bolivar's eight year struggle against colonial dominion in Latin America ends not just with Colombia's independence, but also in neighbouring Venezuela where the fall of the colony kicked the legs out from under Royalist forces. Northern Latin America had been freed, and the rest of the continent would follow.

THE MISTAKE THAT LOST AMERICA

BATTLE Saratoga
DATE 7 October 1777
COMBATANTS Great Britain vs the United States

The Battle of Saratoga is frequently held up as the defining point in the American Revolutionary War – this was the victory that convinced the French to enter the war officially on the side of America. But just how did Britain, the world's foremost super power, lose such a key conflict to a seemingly weaker opponent? What was the defining moment in this loss that would go on to shape the modern world as we know it?

The key British player was General John Burgoyne, a close friend of King George III and member of the House of Commons. Burgoyne planned to take his troops from Canada down the Hudson River while General William Howe's army, which was based in the south, would travel north; the idea was that the two forces would crush the rebellious colonies. However, as all major orders had to be cleared through the war office in London, miscommunication was common and Burgoyne found himself and his army at Saratoga, just outside New York, facing American forces without any support.

The Battle of Saratoga is actually two battles: the Battle of Freeman's Farm on 19 September and the Battle of Bemis Heights on 7 October. In the first of these the British won a victory, but it was a hollow one; they suffered 600 casualties, double the American number, and even after the battle were still surrounded by American forces. They badly needed help.

The British fought twice at Saratoga – the first was an empty victory and the second a crushing defeat

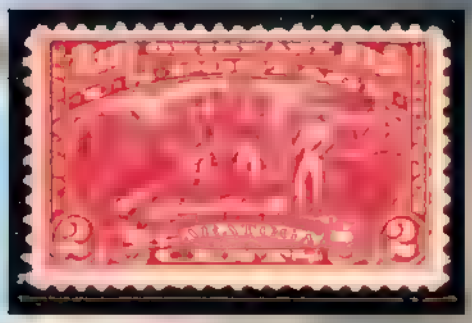
Turning point

Under the warm glow of the sun on a crisp autumn morning General Howe urged his men forwards; his troops obliged, charging with reckless abandon towards their enemy. Within minutes the job had been completed – victory was theirs. Unfortunately for Burgoyne the battle that had taken place was at Brandywine, hundreds of miles away.

While the plan for Burgoyne's army to move southwards and Howe's northwards was approved by the Colonial secretary, orders were never actually issued to Howe from London. He therefore launched his own campaign to capture the American capital of Philadelphia: a lack of communication had doomed Burgoyne's army to failure.

At the Battle of Bemis Heights, the British army attempted to break the blockade of troops surrounding them by fighting their way out. This included a bayonet charge that was easily cut down by musket bullets, and when the American General Arnold – the man who

Burgoyne surrendered to save the lives of his men but was heavily criticised for his defeat on his return to England



The battle is seen as a turning point in the American Revolutionary War, and the surrender of Burgoyne was commemorated on this 1927 postage stamp

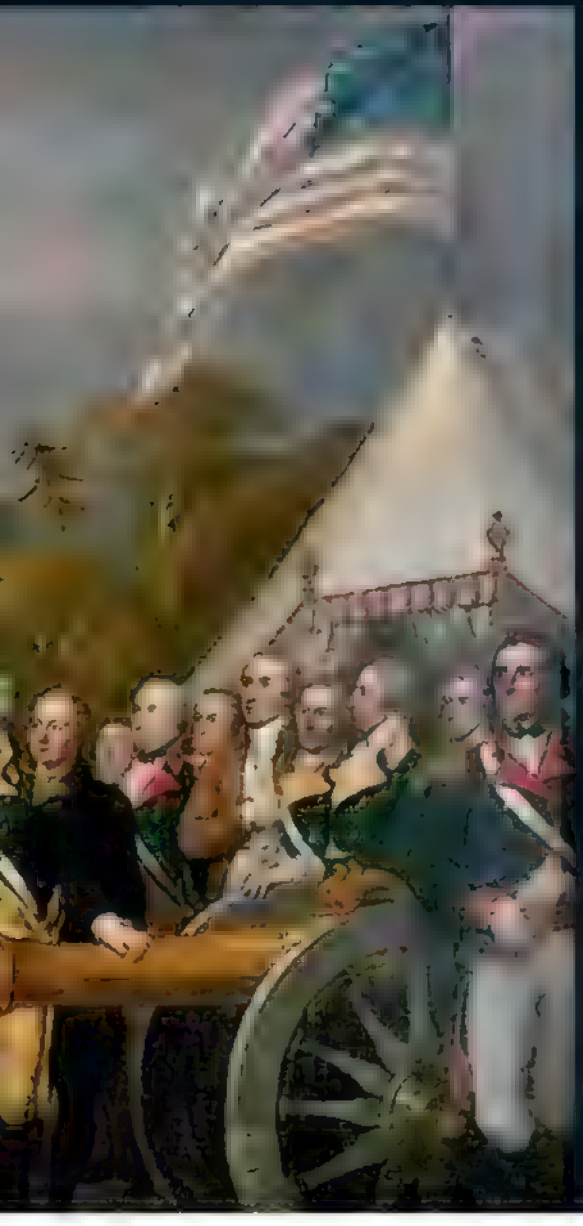
would later change sides and be labelled a traitor – helped to lead an attack which cut through the British Army, the battle was now effectively over.

Burgoyne surrendered so as to save the lives of his remaining troops and the world had seen that the American colonies might just stand a chance of defeating the mighty British Empire.

Consequences

Following the battle King Louis XVI of France entered negotiations that led to a formal alliance and French entry into the war, with Spain joining them in 1799. This meant that Britain had to divert resources and troops from North America to other areas and was a key turning point in the war.

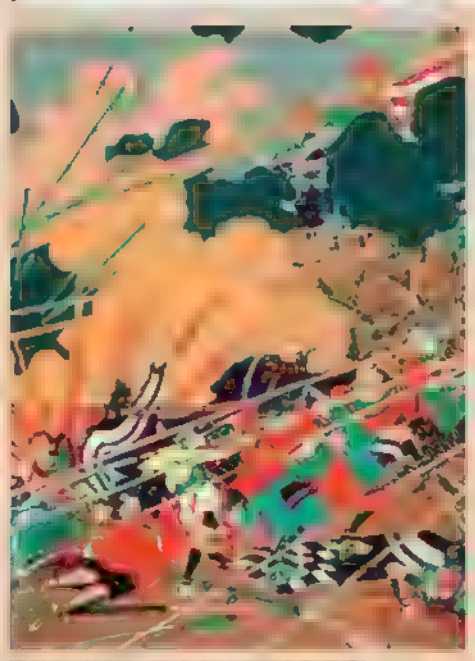
General Howe later defended his actions, writing that in a letter that the king had approved: "I positively mentioned that no direct assistance could be given by the Southern army." General Burgoyne was criticised when he returned to England and never given another military command. In 1783 the war was declared over, with America winning its independence.



FRANCE TAKES THE STAGE

BATTLE Orleans
DATE 1428
COMBATANTS France vs England

For more than six months the city of Orleans had been under English siege and it was widely believed that if it fell then the English would conquer the whole country. Within nine days of Joan of Arc arriving, the siege had been lifted and the French had won their first major battle in the Hundred Years' War. The 19 year-old won the siege through arriving with supplies and reinforcements but mainly through leading by example. Joan didn't display any nuanced military strategy – she literally led from the front, leading the charge against the enemy on several occasions. Her bravery and belief provided this battle's pivotal moment. England's claim to the French throne was left as nothing more than a semantic argument and France would finally emerge as one of the most powerful kingdoms in Europe



JAPAN EMBRACES EUROPEAN WARFARE

BATTLE Nagashino
DATE 1575
COMBATANTS Takeda Katsuyori vs Oda Nobunaga

For centuries the katana had been the deciding factor in Japanese warfare, as different shoguns clashed through the banners of their loyal Samurai. However, at a battle between warring clans near the castle of Nagashino, it wasn't these deadly razor sharp swords that provided the turning point, but the use of firearms – copied from a Portuguese design.

When troops attacked the castle held by the forces of Takeda Katsuyori, the use of guns by the defending forces proved to be pivotal. While firepower had actually been used in battles previously in Japan, this was one of the first times that is was employed strategically on a rotating basis; there were different lines of troops that fired while the others reloaded, so there was no pause for the attackers in between shots.

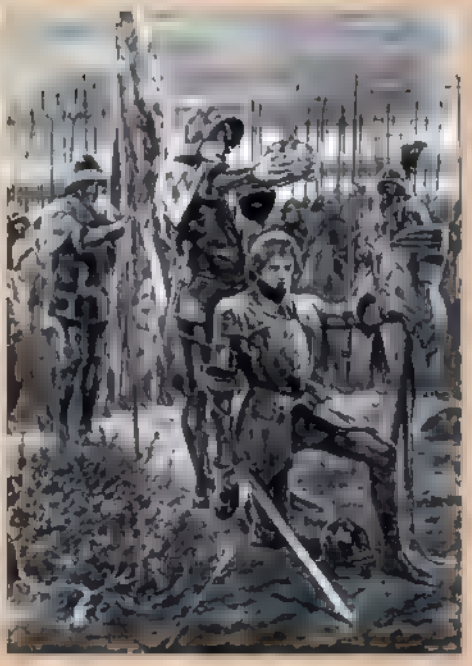
Lost in the gunsmoke, the golden age of the samurai would soon give way to an age of uncertainty, where conflicting European – and eventually American – influences would profoundly alter the way this land viewed the outside world and its place in it, for better and for worse.

THE DAWN OF THE TUDOR AGE

BATTLE Bosworth Field
DATE 22 August 1485
COMBATANTS Richard III vs Henry Tudor

In a field in England the future of the English monarchy was being decided by a battle between the current king, Richard III, and the claimant Henry Tudor. During this period the medieval barons, and who they supported, were extremely important as most monarchs didn't have a standing army. One of the most important families was the Stanleys, and so to ensure the support of Lord Thomas Stanley, Richard had captured Lord Stanley's eldest son.

The king, whom Shakespeare would later immortalise, sent a message to Lord Stanley that his son would be executed unless his 6,000 troops supported him and not Henry. When the reply came back, "Sire I have other sons" the die had been cast. Richard was killed on the battlefield when he led his forces in a charge to try and kill Henry to end the contest, but the Stanleys intervened and his men surrounded Richard and his troops and cut them down. The Tudors would establish their own dynasty that would take England through the Renaissance and into the age of empires.



The battle had one of the highest casualty rates of the whole civil war

THE UNITED STATES IS BORN

BATTLE Gettysburg
DATE 1-3 July 1863
COMBATANTS Confederate States vs United States

The American Civil War had been waging for two years by 1863 with both sides looking capable of victory. The Confederate General Robert E Lee led his forces towards Gettysburg for his second attempted invasion of the north and one that he hoped would end the war. Lee's forces numbered approximately 70,000 men, and with the Union army – commanded by General Meade – having over 90,000, this promised to be the biggest battle of the war so far. It didn't disappoint.

On 1 July Union troops attacked and, despite making some initial headway, were soon pushed back. When battle begun on the second day the Union troops were in a defensive position preparing for what they knew would be a brutal assault.

The turning point

As the smoke from muskets made vision difficult and the sound of gunfire and shouts deafened those around them, some Confederate officers realised that a hill called Little Round Top, the smaller of two rocky hills was almost entirely undefended and that if it could be taken it would give them a clear tactical advantage. Union officers also realise this and order that it is manned; Union soldiers arrive just minutes before the first Confederate attacks begins.

The Union soldiers hold off their enemy for several hours before they are running dangerously low on ammunition. Knowing that they can't just wait for the Confederates to take the hill, as they eventually would, an officer named Joshua Chamberlain orders that his men fix bayonets and charge down the hill. They drive back their enemy and even force them into retreat. While there were many decisive moments in this important battle, not allowing their enemy to occupy the high ground was crucial to the eventual Union victory

Consequences

Without the decisive victory at Gettysburg, Union strength may have crumbled and Lincoln's leadership become untenable. Instead, the United States endures; slavery is abolished, and despite its battle scars resists the attention of the European powers.

CHINA'S BLOODY ROAD TO UNITY

BATTLE Badger Mouth
DATE 1211
COMBATANTS Mongol Empire vs Jin Dynasty

Genghis Khan is known for his fearsome reputation, which can sometimes obscure what an astute military tactician he was. When fighting the troops of Emperor Weishaowang he displayed this skill in abundance. With an estimated 400,000 troops of the Jin Dynasty defending a pass, the decisive moment of the battle occurred when Khan performed a flanking movement; while some of his forces attacked head on, other Mongol troops had been sent round the pass and attacked at the sides, meaning that the Jin army was brutally squeezed. The Jin Dynasty is the first to fall to the Mongols, and over six decades all of China is unified under their rule, transforming the nation into an Asian superpower.

BATTLE FOR THE ENGLISH CROWN

BATTLE Towton
DATE 29 March 1461
COMBATANTS House of Lancaster vs House of York

The bloodiest battle of the War of the Roses – a war between rival claimants for the English crown – took place at Towton. The Lancastrian forces, which supported Henry VI, had around 35,000 men while the Yorkists of Edward IV perhaps 5,000 less. The Yorkists attacked first with their longbow men, and when the Lancastrians attempted to return volleys of their own they found the wind blowing against them caused their arrows to fall short, and so charged their opponents. Sword clashed against sword as man pummelled into man, but the Lancastrians slowly gained the upper hand and victory appeared to be within their grasp.

While tactical positions and manoeuvres are key to winning battles they are sometimes decided on the whim of just one man; with the battle seemingly lost for the Yorkists, the Duke of Norfolk, one of the country's most powerful lords, arrives with his troops and fights on the side of the House of York. This was the battle's crucial turning point, and soon the land was running red with Lancastrian blood.

Towton offered the House of York a 22 year head start on the War of the Roses, and only with Edward IV's death did the House of Lancaster gain the upper hand. More far reaching though, was the sheer scale of the bloodshed – with the flower of Lancastrian nobility felled, Henry Tudor had no real rivals to his claim as head of the house – and eventually the crown.

"While tactical positions and manoeuvres are key to winning battles they are sometimes decided on the whim of one man"

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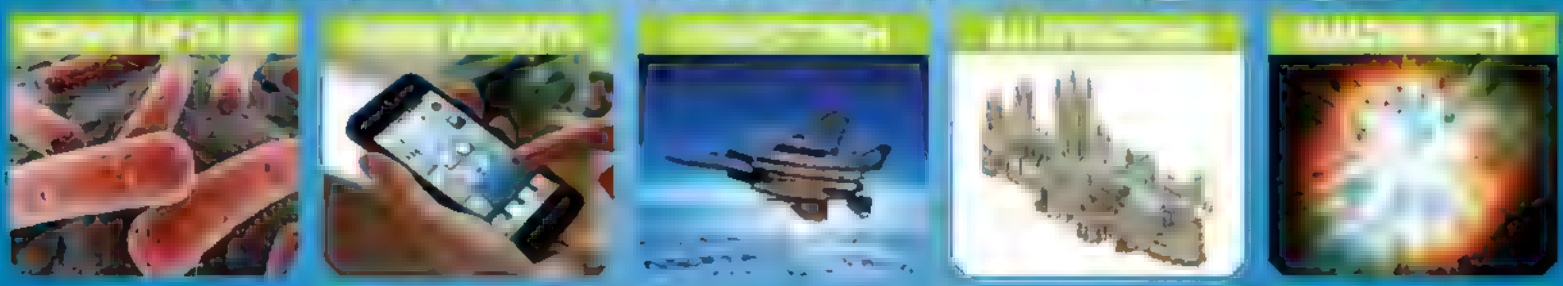

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Operator's Handbook

HMS MEDUSA

World War II: In June 1944, HMS Medusa served as the lead navigation ship on D-Day, guiding allied crafts through enemy minefields

During the course of WWII, over 480 Harbour Defence Motor Launches (HDMLs) were built to defend the United Kingdom's coasts against the German submarine threat. In the early years of the war there was a real fear U-boats could encircle the country and cut off its vital ports and harbours, so these small vessels were intended to build a screen of defence, identifying and sinking any enemy boats. When this threat didn't materialise, the HDMLs were put to work in a whole range of other tasks, such as defending convoys, inserting agents into enemy territory and supporting attacks on islands.

The vessels truly came into their own during Operation Neptune, when they guided allied craft through the deadly enemy minefields of the English Channel on D-Day. In the lead up to the assault, minesweepers carved two channels towards Omaha beach, where American troops would soon be facing some of the toughest resistance of the landings. Vessels ML 1383 and 1387 were positioned as beacons to these channels and would remain for over 30 hours, guiding the allied craft packed with men and equipment on their way to the beaches of Normandy.

Designed to be small, silent, agile and incredibly flexible, HDMLs weren't intended for longevity. Of the original 480 or so craft, only one remains operational today: ML 1387, now called the HMS Medusa. Built in Poole, UK, in 1943, the Medusa took part in Exercise Fabius in May 1944, which was a practise operation for D-Day, before providing crucial support of the landings themselves.

The HMS Medusa, commission in 1943 and built in Poole, UK, served allied ships during the war, guiding them through enemy waters.

The crew of HMS Medusa, HDML 1397, including Commanding Officer TSLt Arthur Maurice Liddiard RNVR (above). At its current moorings in Gosport, UK. (below).

ML 1387 'HMS MEDUSA'

COMMISSIONED 29 December 1943
CREW 12
LENGTH 72 feet
ORIGIN Dorset, UK
TOP SPEED 12 knots
ENGINE Twin diesel Gardner 8L3s
WEIGHT 54 tons (water displacement)

"HDMLS WERE PUT TO WORK DEFENDING CONVOYS, INSERTING AGENTS INTO ENEMY TERRITORY AND SUPPORTING ATTACKS"

The Chart Room aboard the HMS Medusa, this was where Sub Lt Maurice Liddiard would have outlined the ships involvement in D-Day.

OERLIKON 20MM AUTOMATIC CANNON

Each of the two deck-mounted cannons were manned by one gunner strapped in by a harness. This helped the gunner to easily manoeuvre the weapon almost 360 degrees, as well as upward to a nearly fully vertical angle. A safety feature was built into the mechanism of the mount to prevent the weapon rotating a full 360 degrees, as gunners were prone to accidentally damaging their own vessel as they turned and followed their target. The guns carried 60-round magazines, and were capable of delivering 480 rounds per minute. This meant even a brief squeeze of the trigger for just over seconds could expel an entire magazine into the enemy. Bursts of fire like this were ideal against diving Stuka bombers and other aircraft.

The manoeuvrability of the 20mm gun made it perfect for levelling fire at both aircraft and targets on the surface

Two nearby lockers each contained four extra magazines for reloading the gun

Medusa currently has only one 20mm gun, put together from donations and chance findings at scrap yards

TWIN VICKERS 'K' MACHINE GUNS

Two twin Vickers machine guns could be mounted on the vessel, one each on the port and starboard sides. These gas-operated guns were each capable of between 900 and 1,200 rounds per minute and were originally developed for the RAF. They were ideal for dealing with enemy aircraft, as well as providing supporting fire

THE BRIDGE

From here the commanding officer could raise an action stations alarm, as well as communicate to the engineer and the radio operator below deck. The Engine Order Telegraph (EOT) would deliver orders to the engineer, with one lever for each engine. A bell ringing in the engine room alerted the engineer, who would then adjust the revs of each engine to correspond to the order from the EOT at his end. Just like EOTs used on much larger vessels, the orders included Full Ahead, Stop and Slow, but because it took a small amount of time to adjust each engine, slowing or accelerating the vessel would not have happened instantly.

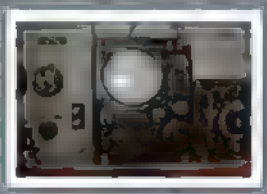
The EOT system was typical of much larger vessels, but was included on HDMLs as standard

ELECTRONIC WARFARE AT D-DAY

MEDUSA WAS EQUIPPED WITH SOME OF THE MOST CUTTING-EDGE TECHNOLOGY, ALL MANNED BELOW DECK BY A LONE OPERATOR

GEE NAVIGATION SYSTEM

Designed for the RAF to improve the accuracy of its bombers, this system was accurate to within a quarter of a mile. Three stations on the shore would send out simultaneous pulses, each of which would be received by the Gee, then the timings between each pulse would determine the location of the vessel. Because it was feared that the Germans would be able to block the signal of the Gee, new transmitters and receiver modules were developed just for D-Day



DECCA SYSTEM (QM)

Developed in Canada and tested at the Firth [illegible] up by the Germans, this [illegible] D-Day [illegible]

IFF (SI RADAR)

This [illegible] could display how far away a target was. It was capable of identifying a destroyer at around [illegible] miles away. An IFF system (Indicate Friend Foe) would also indicate where allied or unidentified [illegible]

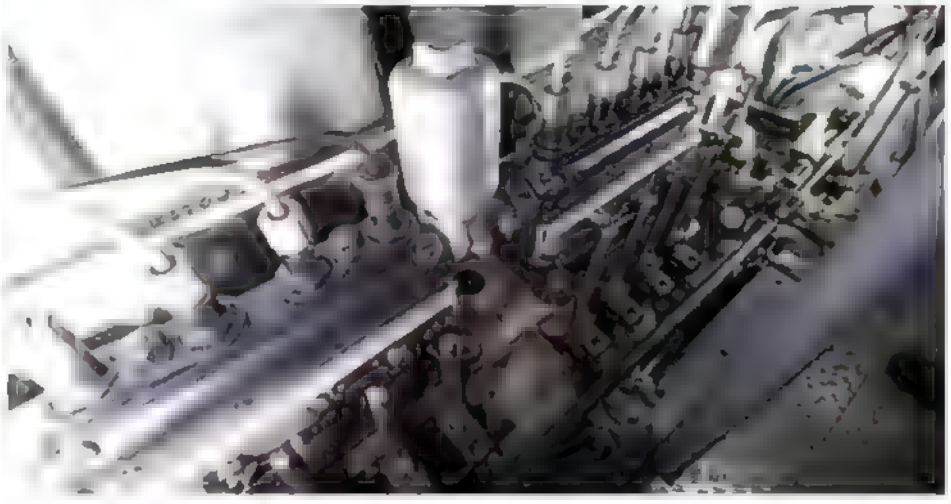
THE ENGINE ROOM

HDMLs were fitted with two diesel engines and one generator to charge the electricity. There would be an engineer manning the engine room at all times, on alternating shifts of 12 hours. Cruising at around 600 revs per minute, the vessel would consume an average of seven gallons of fuel per hour between all three engines. With room to store 1,550 gallons of fuel on board, the vessel could stay at sea for over 2,000 nautical miles. It was the job of the engineer to ensure that fuel was consumed equally between tanks on both the port and starboard sides of the boat, so that the craft remained level and balanced, rather than lopsided.

Below: *In the event a depth charge was dropped to attack a submarine, the engineer could boost each engine's revs to 900 per minute so the vessel could escape the blast!*

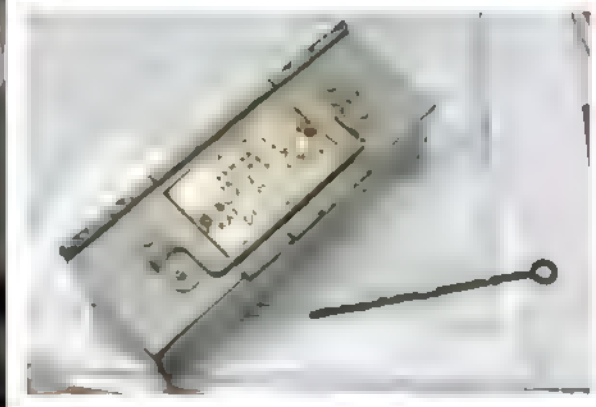
Above: *The two engines could produce less than 300 horsepower between them – they were built for endurance, not power*

Below: *Engines were regularly swapped out of older and into newer craft by the Admiralty and weren't originally designed to last more than five years*



SUBMARINE DETECTION

The original purpose of HDMLs was to seek out and destroy submarines. A large metal dome on the underside of the vessel would send out sonar pings, which would then return back any objects within range. The size and direction of a submarine would be displayed on the automatic graph, and the crew would easily be able to manoeuvre the vessel to pursue it.



This box (left) contained a detonator that was to be used by the commanding officer to destroy all the classified equipment on the vessel, if it were at risk of being captured by the enemy

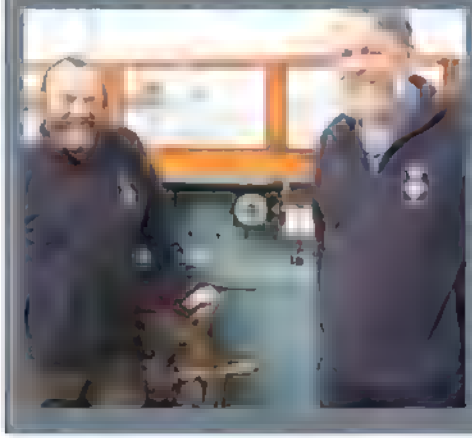
THE WARDROOM

The skipper and first officer occupied this room near the aft of the vessel. Though it was nearly the exact size of the galley area, which housed six of the crew, the two officers occupied this space in relative comfort, complete with an alcohol cabinet, furnishings and the vessel's safe. This safe contained the crew's pay, the captain's orders, side arms, a flare gun and any other sensitive documents. A bell system connected to the galley was also in place, for the officers to call for their meals or other attention from the crew. It was here that refugees hide when they were aboard the vessel.

THE MEDUSA TRUST

WWW.HMSMEDUSA.ORG.UK

Set up in 2003, the Medusa Trust worked [illegible] which was in need of drastic restoration work. "In order to do the sort of fundraising we needed to do, she needed to be part of a charitable trust," says Medusa's current skipper and Chairman of the Trust Alan Watson. "The whole purpose of the Trust was to restore, operate and maintain this vessel, but it has broadened slightly. As well as this vessel we're also guardians of the history of all the HDMLs... We are the last crew of the last HDML now, which is a bit special." Along with coxswain and historian of the Medusa, Brian Holmes, the Trust continues to piece together the history of these vessels and the stories of their crew for future generations.



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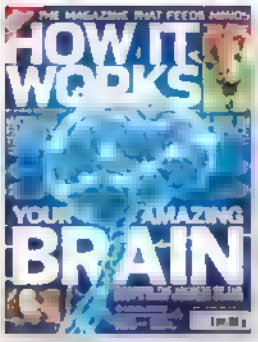

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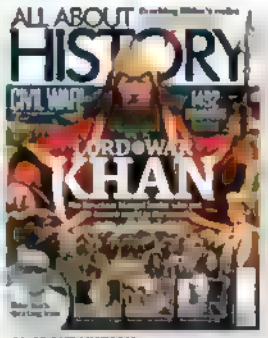

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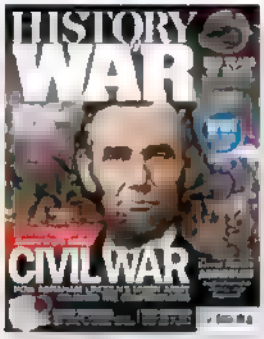

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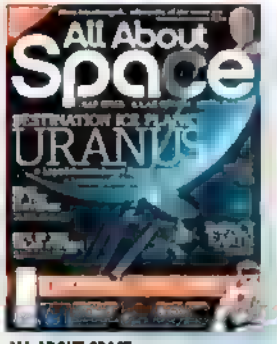

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Magazine team

Editor in Chief James Hoare
☎ 01202 586 200
frontline@imagine-publishing.co.uk
Production Editor Tim Williamson
Staff Writer Jack Griffiths
Senior Designer Curtis Fermor-Dunman
Photographer James Sheppard
Senior Art Editor Helen Harris
Publishing Director Aaron Asadi
Head of Design Ross Andrews

Contributors
Hemesh Alles / The Art Agency, Ben Biggs, Andrew Brown, Ed Crooks, Erlingur Einarsson, Philip Morris, Jen Neal, Alexander Pang, Nick Soldinger, Frances White, Steve Wright

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hang.deretz@imagine-publishing.co.uk
Accounts Manager Jennifer Galvin
☎ 01202 586431
jennifer.galvin@imagine-publishing.co.uk
Accounts Manager Lee Mussell
☎ 01202 586424
lee.mussell@imagine-publishing.co.uk
Sales Executive Luke Biddiscombe
☎ 01202 586431
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Circulation
Head of Circulation Darren Pearce
☎ 01202 586200

Production
Production Director Jane Hawkins
☎ 01202 586200

Founders
Group Managing Director Damian Butt
Group Finance and Commercial Director Steven Boyd

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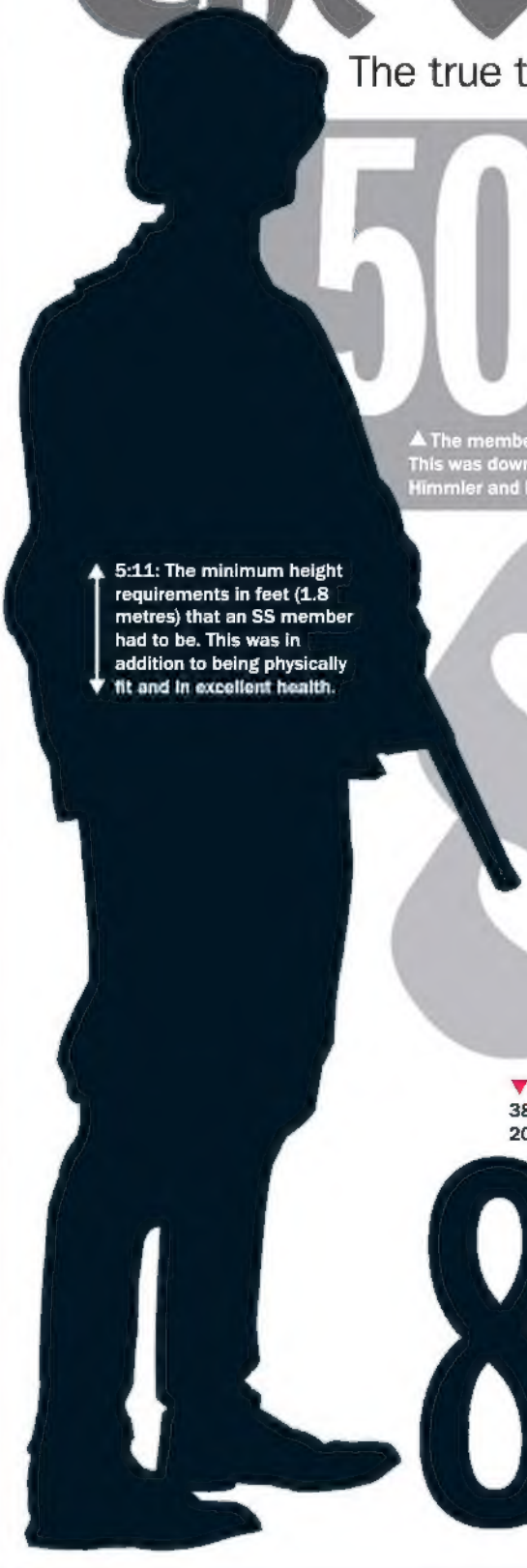
WAR IN NUMBERS

The Waffen SS

The true terror of the armed wing of the Nazi Shutzstaffel



50,000

▲ The membership of the SS when the Nazis came to power. This was down to the new leadership of the fanatical Heinrich Himmler and his right-hand man Reinhard Heydrich

1750

▲ The year in which a member of the SS had to trace their Aryan history to. This requirement was reduced considerably in later years as the war effort became more desperate.

20

◀ The average age of applicants for the SS-Helferinnenkorps, the female section of the SS.

85

◀ The number of SA (Sturmabteilung) officers who died in the 1934 Night of the Long Knives. After this the SS replaced the SA as the dominant military force in the Third Reich, alongside the Wehrmacht.

2 MILLION

▲ The amount of Jews killed by the Einsatzgruppen, the anti-Semitic death squads within the SS.

30

◀ The original Shutzstaffel was created in 1925 and only had 30 men. Their sole role was to guard Hitler.

▲ 5:11: The minimum height requirements in feet (1.8 metres) that an SS member had to be. This was in addition to being physically fit and in excellent health.

▼ The estimated strength of the Waffen SS at its 38-division peak in 1944. This reportedly included 20,000 Frenchmen in the Charlemagne Division.

800,000

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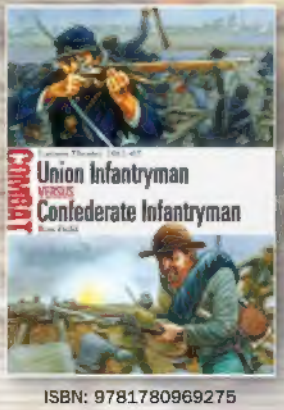

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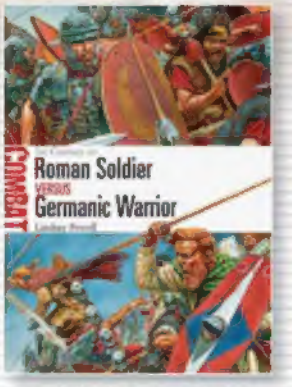

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Rye Bay Scallop Week

May

Hastings, Jack in the Green

Battle Medieval Fayre

June

Great War Weekend, Kent & East Sussex Railway

August

Herstmonceux Medieval Festival

Bodiam Castle Grand Medieval Weekend

September

Bexhill Festival of the Sea

Hastings Seafood & Wine Festival

October

Hastings Bonfire & Torchlight Procession

Battle, Re-enactment of the Battle of Hastings

Rye, Wild Boar Week, Festival of Game

November

Hastings Herring Fair

Sussex Bonfire & Torchlight Processions, Rye & Robertsbridge

Battle >> Bexhill >> Hastings >> Herstmonceux >> Pevensey >> Rye